

Australian Garden

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HISTORY

New Zealand
Canberra's Lake Burley Griffin
Banks's botanical diplomacy



'Expanding Horizons' AGHS annual conference 2019, Wellington NZ

John Maurer



Top: Cabbage Tree Cove, Half Way Bay, Lake Wakatipu, ca 1880–98, New Zealand, by Burton Brothers studio.

Middle: Exterior of Te Papa Tongarewa museum at night.

Bottom: Wellington city from Mt Victoria, with Te Papa in centre foreground.

all images Te Papa Tongarewa

Cover 'The head of a chief of New Zealand, the face curiously tataow'd, or marked according to their manner' [detail]. Sydney Parkinson (1745–71) T Chambers sc. London, 1784, Plate XVI. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington NZ

Next year AGHS is boldly heading east, with its first-ever offshore annual conference. Our destination is Wellington.

Background

The conference (details in the enclosed brochure) will be held on 25–28 October 2019, almost exactly 250 years after botanists Daniel Solander and Joseph Banks began six months of collecting specimens and artefacts which excited the scientific world at the time. The work of botanical artists gave faithful representations of an exotic world. Work today continues to establish what original objects from Cook's voyage survive.

Conference venue and facilities

The conference will take place in Te Papa Tongarewa (literally, the 'container of treasures'), the National Museum of New Zealand. The philosophy behind the museum emphasises the nation's cultural treasures and deep ancestral links to the Māori people. Te Papa's location on the Wellington Harbour waterfront in the nation's capital, and the museum's first-rate conference facilities, make it an outstanding choice of venue.

Te Papa is within easy walking distance of accommodation and restaurants (a list of recommended accommodation will be provided to delegates upon registration).

The conference's talks will be given in Te Papa's Soundings Theatre, a raked auditorium with great visibility of speakers and high quality audio and visual support. All catering at the venue is provided by on-site professionals. There are break-out spaces for teas and ready access to lunches on the same level as the theatre; the conference dinner will also be held at Te Papa. Immediately outside the museum is a safe loading area for coaches transporting delegates to the gardens we will visit.

Rather than independent stalls carrying books, botanical art and other relevant merchandise normally for sale at conferences, the Te Papa museum shop is available. It carries books, gifts, jewellery, art, apparel, homewares, and items relating to current exhibitions.

Te Papa's collections

Te Papa has several floors of exhibitions featuring historical and contemporary collections of art, natural history and significant culture. If you can, schedule some additional time before or after the conference to explore what is on offer. A full conference program doesn't allow the time these collections deserve.

Taking some time in Wellington, or elsewhere in New Zealand, either before or after the conference is highly recommended. Galleries, gardens, and stunning scenery are all worth visiting. The North Island has fascinating thermal activities and glorious beaches, while the South Island is quite a contrast with soaring alps, braided streams and tranquil lakes.

Join us!

Consider joining us for our New Zealand conference as we explore the history, landscape and gardens of the Wellington region. You will be assured of a warm Kiwi welcome when we cross the Tasman — and expand our horizons.

Editorial

Professor Tim Entwisle – Patron, AGHS

photo Janusz Molinski



Bravery in the garden

In my after-dinner remarks at the 2018 AGHS national conference held in the Southern Highlands, I tackled (gingerly) the subject of bravery. This topic resonated, I felt, with the conference theme of ‘gardens in times of peace and conflict’. It also allowed me to respond briefly to talks by Stuart Read on advocacy (encouraging us to be ratbags), John Dwyer on weeds (seeking a truce for the war on weeds) and Craig Burton (arguing for due consideration of the many cultural layers in a landscape).

I started by demonstrating my deficiencies in bravery, as a child and then into early adulthood. Also my view that it's not so brave to join a chorus of condemnation on Facebook, or to pursue a cause with all your friends and compatriots behind you. It may well be right and worthy, but not necessarily brave. This was the case when I resisted the calls from shock jocks and misguided burghers to remove and replace trees in Hospital Road when Director of Sydney's Royal Botanic Garden – I had the full support of staff and those I respected in government behind me. It was right and it was tough, but not that brave.

What is brave is to stand out from the crowd when needed. To do things that are right but not necessarily fashionable or politically aligned with your cohort. I mentioned that I had drawn criticism, from some, for chairing an expert panel to assist with the planning of 22 hectares of new open space in Melbourne created by the elevation of rail to remove level crossings. It was a project I was delighted to contribute to and one from which I've gained a much better understanding of competing community desires. I would do it again for any government wanting to get the best from its green spaces.

I mentioned Fire Gardens, our most recent event at Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, where Melbourne Gardens was artistically ‘set alight’ for four nights. Over 30,000 people attended, with another 5000 on a waiting list, experiencing something elemental and exciting. It was a risk, of course, and I was relieved at the end of the last night that apart from some singed lawns (anticipated and easy to repair) our landscape and plants were safe and no-one hurt themselves on the flames (there were no fences, instead assuming common sense and good judgement...). It took bravery from all my staff and a desire to step outside our comfort zone but we attracted a whole new community of visitors and presented the garden in a fresh and unforgettable way. It would have been easy to say no to this event.

So my plea is to at least consider if not embrace new ideas and views. To avoid partisan views and to encourage nuanced debates. Be true to your values and when the occasion demands it, be a ratbag. But always be ready to change your mind should the evidence demand it, or the longer term or greater good benefit from it. Sometimes it's braver, and the right thing, to not jump on the bandwagon.

And finally, when you do advocate or lobby, do so with integrity and dignity.

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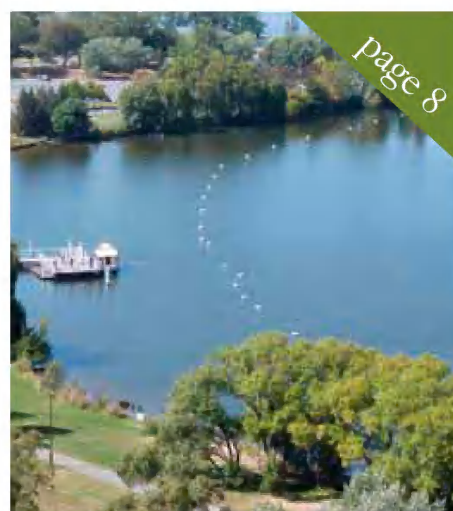
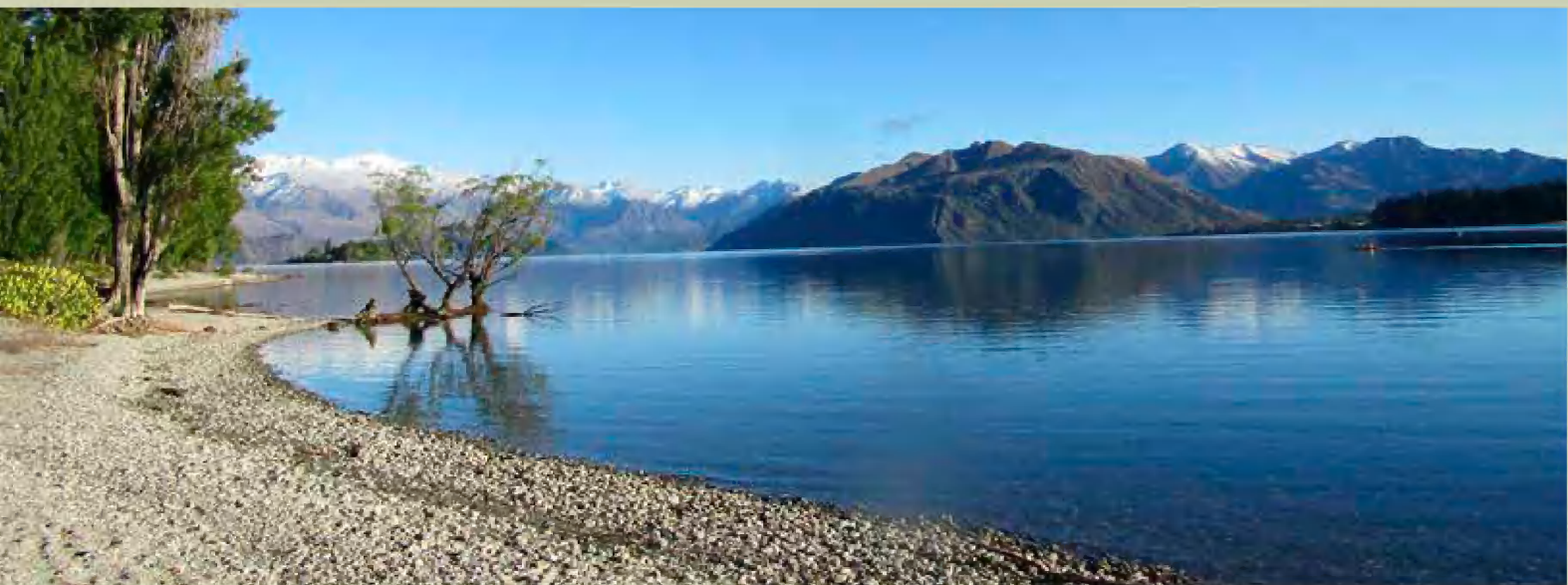


photo Alan Robertson

A South Island gardens tour



Lynne Walker



When I moved from the South Island of New Zealand to Australia 30 years ago, New Zealanders rarely opened their gardens. During return visits over the years I have noticed more and more lovely gardens opening their gates to the public.

When my husband Richard and I made a reconnaissance trip to the South Island in 2015, the variety and standard of the gardens we saw took us completely by surprise — large and small, town and country, historic and not so old, seaside and alpine, gracious and quirky, with many of international quality. Garden owners were welcoming and passionate; they included some incredibly knowledgeable plantmen and women.

New Zealand Garden Trust

I believe one reason for the opening of more gardens is the establishment in March 2004 of the New Zealand Garden Trust, a trust of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture. The Trust aims to promote the best in New Zealand gardens and horticulture, and has set up a system to assess all gardens and provide visitors with information that truly represents each garden.

Trust members are private or public garden owners who allow people to visit their gardens. There is an associate membership for non-garden owners who wish to maintain a network with gardens, receive the newsletters and have the opportunity to attend conferences.

Independently of the Trust, many regional gardens also raise money for local and national charities.

The range, quality and number of gardens we saw in 2015 convinced us that an organised tour

of South Island gardens through the Australian Garden History Society would appeal to members. Such was the number and quality of gardens which couldn't be missed that the itinerary was limited to gardens in just two of the South Island's provinces, Canterbury and Otago.

2017 AGHS tour

In October 2017, 20 members of AGHS — many of whom had never been to New Zealand before — left Christchurch with my husband Richard and me. We travelled first to the charming coastal village of Akaroa on the Banks Peninsula, then inland to some high-country gardens on the foothills of snow-topped Mt Hutt, southwards visiting coastal gardens to Dunedin, inland again to Central Otago's Lake Wanaka and finally to Queenstown on the shores of Lake Wakatipu in the Southern Alps, a mountain range which extends along much of the South Island.

In NZ as elsewhere, geography has a profound influence on gardens and farming. The area our tour saw was generally 43–45° south, east of the Southern Alps, with moderate but regular and reasonably reliable precipitation of 600–700 mm annually, and sometimes fierce north-westerlies. The Canterbury Plains and its challenges are in marked contrast to those facing the gardens of Central Otago, where arid and often freezing conditions prevail. It was fascinating to see how garden owners created lush oases in difficult conditions.

We began the tour with Broadfields, a large garden full of New Zealand plants — not just native plants but exotic cultivars bred in New Zealand. The garden contains the longest NZ native borders in the world, and tour members were intrigued to see a large range of plants they

Opposite top: Middle Farm garden, Southern Alps, one of the alpine gardens visited by the author and her AGHS tour group in 2017.

Opposite middle: Lake Wanaka.

Opposite bottom: Long borders at the NZ native garden Broadfields, Christchurch.

Below: The happy travellers of 2017.

all photos Lynne Walker





Above top: Chantecler in Central Otago.

Above bottom: French Farm.

Right top: The Giants House.

Right middle: The rose garden at Ōhinetahi.

Right bottom: Surveying the scene at Fishermans Bay garden, Banks Peninsula.

all photos Lynne Walker

had never encountered before. From there we went to an essentially English style garden owned by one of NZ's foremost plantspeople whose knowledge and plant combinations are exemplary.

Banks Peninsula

On the Banks Peninsula the expansive garden of French Farm sheltered within a valley had wonderful plantings both native and exotic. Over dinner in our seaside accommodation that night one of the group – in fact, AGHS Chair Richard Heathcote – said to me ‘Well, I don’t know what you are going to show us for the next 12 days which can possibly top today’, which set a challenge for the rest of the tour!

Day 2 involved a spectacular dolphin cruise followed by two gardens of complete contrast. Tour participant Glenn Cooke described the ‘exuberant and quirky garden’ of historic Giant’s House in Akaroa. ‘Colourful mosaics and stunning plant combinations complement each other. The owner/artist [Josie Martin] is a trained horticulturist which is one of the reasons this garden works so well.’

The second Day 2 garden, Fishermans Bay, perched precariously on the side of dramatic coastline, was a stunning haven with breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean. Native plants (including 150 hebes) are combined with a diverse array of exotics. This was truly gardening on the edge.

Because New Zealand is a small country it is possible to see gardens of great diversity within a very short space of time, as Day 3 graphically illustrated. We began with Ōhinetahi, a historic garden of international significance in a sheltered coastal bay, went to the Christchurch Botanic Gardens founded in 1863, then to one of the South Island’s oldest private gardens, at the foothills of the Southern Alps.

Ōhinetahi is one of just a few gardens classified by the NZ Garden Trust as being of international significance. It was designed by the owner Sir Miles Warren more than 40 years ago, and uses the concept of ‘rooms’ to great effect.

We then travelled across the Canterbury Plains to visit a homestead and garden which date from the late 1850s when the property was bought by New Zealand politician Sir John Hall, whose great-granddaughter and family now own it. The garden contains huge specimens of sequoia, cedar, hornbeam, laurel, elm and sycamore underplanted with woodland plantings which change seasonally. The owners have enormous enthusiasm for this garden and for the preservation of its heritage.

On days 4 and 5 we visited four alpine gardens at the foot of the Southern Alps where heavy snow is a way of life, before heading across to the coast to two significant historic gardens. In all of these gardens rhododendrons and azaleas began to shine and tour members were astonished by their height and vigour.

Otago

Heading south to the province of Otago we visited woodlands gardens, a large heritage rose garden, and the 150 year old Dunedin Botanic Garden before heading inland through Lord of the Rings country to the arid Maniototo Plain where it was startling and fascinating to find a very large garden, Clachanburn, flourishing, despite the dry climate and heavy clay soils. The one acre garden begun almost 50 years ago has expanded to four and a half acres and the fence has been moved six times.

On Day 11 we visited four alpine gardens on the shores of Lake Wanaka, each completely different, each with a magnificent setting against the backdrop of the lake.

The tour concluded in Queenstown with two large and very different gardens, one highly structured with many themed garden areas and thousands of fascinating plants, the other more relaxed and softly planted, where ‘the spaces you leave are as important as the spaces you plant’.

And castles

There was so much variety. A cruise on Dunedin Harbour enabled us to witness albatrosses soaring in the stiff breeze and see the rugged country where they nest. We saw the historic house Olveston in Dunedin (ca 1907), art galleries, and both of New Zealand’s mock castles, one near Oamaru and the other, Larnach Castle, built on the Otago Peninsula in the 1870s. Larnach Castle’s magnificent grounds include alpine, perennial, herb, New Zealand plants and southern hemisphere gardens. Quite how these thrive is a mystery on its very windy exposed site with views out to the Pacific Ocean.

Tour members loved discovering NZ and its gardens. They were a joy to show my country to!

This is an abridged version of Lynne Walker's article first published as one of the feature series 'Flying Visits' in *Historic Gardens Review* issue 37, October 2018.

Longtime AGHS member **Lynne Walker** was Northern NSW coordinator for the former Australia's Open Garden Scheme, and took a garden tour of Australians and New Zealanders to the UK in 2012. She writes for national and international magazines while continuing to farm cattle with her husband Richard Bird.





Juliet Ramsay and Anne Claoue-Long

Public parklands traded for apartments

A line of buoys in Canberra's Lake Burley Griffin delineates the proposed infill extending approximately 80 m out from the present lake shore at the boat ramp.

Major changes and development can affect public parks and urban open spaces — including landscapes of national significance such as Lake Burley Griffin.

photo Juliet Ramsay

If you are reading this, the chances are that you like plants, gardens and parks: the smell of flowers and earth, the sound and sight of birds and bees, reflections off water, tall trees and the variety of a layered landscape, perhaps with views to the distance.

The importance of this connection with nature is well evidenced by therapeutic gardens in hospital settings, the growth in urban demand for community gardens, guerrilla gardening on nature strips, and high-rise balconies crowded with pot plants as testimony to people's wish to tend gardens, even miniature ones.

With a rise in apartment living and houses built on ever smaller blocks with scant space for gardens, the reality for most people is loss of opportunities to connect with nature — unless one drives to a national park. This makes the surviving urban public parks and open space even more valuable.

Open space or waste space

Hardly a week goes by without media comment on Australia's rapidly increasing population, the resulting congestion in our main cities and the building of new 'landmark' apartments. New housing estates are being built onto small towns and whole new towns at the perimeters of our main cities. With denser occupation open space is threatened through disappearance of front

(and back) gardens, ever decreasing building setbacks, and building on undeveloped blocks previously believed by their communities to be reserves — or in some cases even public parks.

'Space' is an increasingly important landscape value but some people believe that open space is wasted space. It is not contributing by making money as a part of overall progress and development to the economy. Space is greedily sought after and mined by governments and developers. Any urban open areas that are not manicured parks designed for ease of maintenance, with hardscape walkways and simplistic easy-care plantings, are in danger of being termed wasteland ripe for building development. Sustainability arguments and the need for denser living to avoid urban sprawl, are used as justifications. Cultural landscapes as heritage places are most vulnerable to this exploitation.

The concrete jungle is not only often unattractive and unhealthy. Intergenerational equity, the environment including important wildlife habitats and corridors, and significant landscape experiences, vistas and views are all under threat. Once open space is built on it is gone, with the impact of that loss being felt ever after. A further consequence of such building on open space is that a rise in land values closely follows residential development, inevitably leading to further development for private use and encouraging even denser infill.

CASE STUDY 1

Lake Burley Griffin and its parklands

Planning for ornamental waters was a prerequisite for Australia's national capital. In the winning entry to the capital's design competition, a substantial lake system was planned by Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin in 1911, and amended by WB Griffin in 1913 with further modification in 1918.

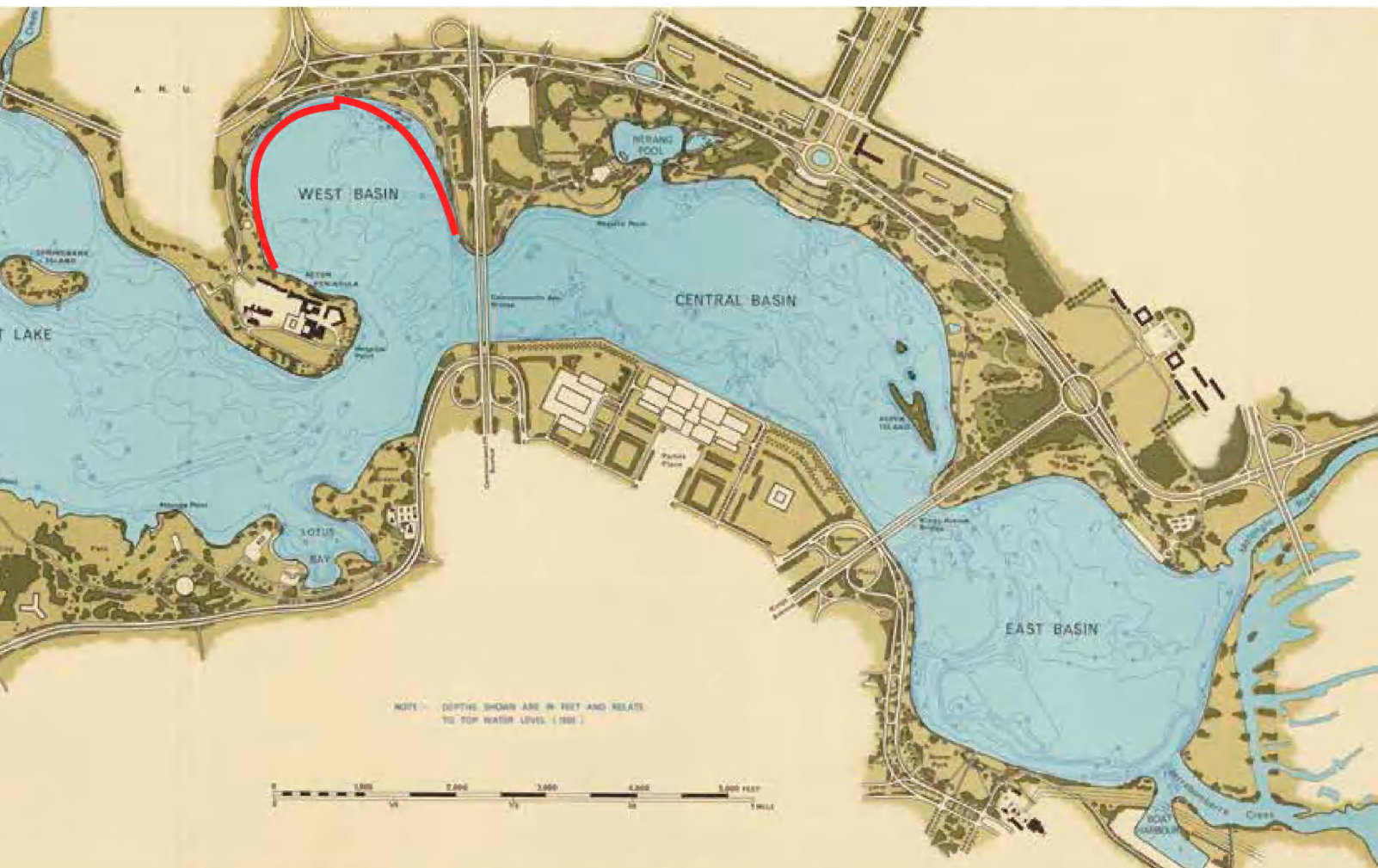
The Menzies Government's National Capital Development Commission undertook intensive technical research and strong consideration of practical requirements, including a scale model to test variable water flows and their impacts, that made the lake system plan work. In doing so, Griffin's three-basin composition was kept but altered in the light of greater understanding of the course and flow of the Molonglo River to be impounded. This delineation softened the hard lake edges so that the East and West Basins had a naturalistic edging more in line with physical contours, in a style noted by experts as 'modern picturesque'. The lake was modelled for formal and informal areas and expanded in parts to create rowing and sailing courses. West Basin

was developed as a horseshoe shape to utilise the natural form of Acton Peninsula as a partial boundary.

The lake works included the two bridges and a dam wall, each of which was considered an outstanding engineering work of the time. Over 40.5 ha of landscape planting was done – a total planting of 55,000 trees, stretching around 35 km with character areas using existing native trees and groupings of willows and poplars and more regular plantings in the formal areas. From the moment the lake filled in 1963 it became a major recreation feature of the fledgling city, with people enjoying the natural (soft) lake environments as well as the structured (hard) environments.

The completed lake and parklands was a stunning masterwork of landscape design and engineering that successfully kept the spirit of Griffin's plan but achieved a functioning and modern attractive expression. It received the Australian Institute of Landscape Architecture Award of Landscape Excellence in 1986. In 2001 the lake received an Award of Excellence from Engineering Australia. Today people use the lake and its landscape for water sports, fishing, cycling, walking, events and visiting for relaxation and enjoying views and vistas.

Lake Burley Griffin foreshore parkland [detail]. National Capital Development Commission map G8984 C3G45, 1964. The authors have superimposed the red line to show proposed lakebed reclamation. National Library of Australia





Above: The Land Development Agency plan for proposed West Basin development in 2015. The superimposed red line shows the existing lake edge.

Right top: Aerial view of Lake Burley Griffin West Basin infill line – the lake and parkland left of the buoy line is planned to be appropriated for residential apartments and formal promenade against a retaining wall.

photo Alan Robertson

Right bottom: Community picnic in the windbreak rows of trees at Haig Park, Braddon, November 2018.

photo Anne Claoue-Long

Despite considerable professional research on the history and value of the lake and its designed landscape setting, including several heritage nominations to the Federal Government accompanied by continued lobbying in the face of inactivity to process these, the heritage significance of the entire Lake Burley Griffin and lakeshore landscape remains officially unlisted, and therefore lacks official heritage protection.

The Australian Garden History Society has added Canberra's Lake Burley Griffin and lakeshore parklands to its list of Landscapes at Risk because of industrial and commercial developments as a result of land rezoning for apartment blocks and a contested planning process.

The Lake Burley Griffin Guardians, a community group who are spearheading the campaign against proposed loss of public park to private development, were formed in February 2015 and are committed to safeguarding one of Canberra's greatest treasures: the open space of Lake Burley Griffin and its lakeshore landscape setting.

Proposal to turn lake and parkland into an apartment estate

There is a proposal for extending the lakeshore by up to 80 m near the existing jetty, to appropriate an additional 2.8 hectares of West Basin's lakebed and thus create a sizeable estate of private four to six storey apartments. The current informal open public park, Acton Park, and its public vistas will be privatised. A new formal promenade frontage with concrete boardwalk will be constructed resulting



in damaging the three-basin lake form carefully researched and constructed in the 1960s.

The alteration of current natural earth lake edges with small beaches to hard form walls, with problematic public access for all but new apartment dwellers, will result in a loss of a wildlife environment (for platypus, water rat and waterfowl), loss of around 100 mature trees, loss of opportunity for the public to connect with nature, and loss of public vistas and views including those experienced from Commonwealth Avenue, the major route to Parliament House. The apartments will create cold winter shadows over most of the public area. There will be increased heat bank, winter wind channelling, increased wave action on the lake edge, and traffic issues arising from the increased residential density.

CASE STUDY 2

Haig Park, Canberra

Another area of Canberra parkland noted by AGHS as being at risk is Haig Park, just north of Canberra city centre. This area of mixed evergreen and deciduous exotic trees was planted in 1921–23 as a windbreak for the newly developing city. The linear composition of uniform planting and absence of formal



finishes provides its defining character. It is a rare example of its type and an integral component of the landscaped open space between adjoining suburbs. Despite heritage listing, 'renewal' proposals now aim to develop and enhance the park space into separate areas of differing character with additional recreational facilities, formed paths and hard curbing to better serve the projected population growth from an explosion in apartment building along Canberra's new light rail route adjacent to the site. The recognised informal and linear heritage aspects may be sidelined.

The importance of community advocacy

Don't presume major changes and development activity won't happen to public parks and urban open spaces near you. Just listing landscapes at risk is not sufficient. In the spirit of 'use it or lose it', communities who value their open space and parks should make that fact known to their governing authorities through visible documented use and by campaigning for management strategies to protect these important urban assets for their green character and heritage values if applicable. Do this before land economics and developer-driven strategies can overtake community wishes and expertise in planning design and heritage identification.

In Canberra now there is community concern about a lack of an overarching master plan for the ongoing development of the city. Increasing densification and resulting loss of green space might also mean the loss of a vision of the city as defined by its landscape. Open parkland spaces, such as on the lake foreshores and Haig Park, should be retained and maintained as the lungs of the city without further residential infill or neatening up for ease of maintenance or to increase the potential attractiveness of adjacent apartment sales. The value of the natural green

infrastructure of the urban forest, parks and open space for public health and environmental benefits in a changing world is in need of greater recognition.

Acknowledgement

This article was produced on behalf of the AGHS ACT Monaro Riverina branch committee who wanted to publicise the issues concerning two of their local landscapes on the AGHS Landscapes at Risk list.

West Basin taken looking westwards, with the Nishi building on the righthand side.
photo Juliet Ramsay

For more information see:

AGHS Landscapes at Risk (AGHS website).

Lake Burley Griffin Guardians website.

National Capital Authority *Lake Burley Griffin and Adjacent Lands heritage management plan* (2008) and *Assessment report* (2010).

As yet unprocessed nominations to Federal Government Department of the Environment for heritage listing of Lake Burley Griffin and Lakeshore Landscape.

Haig Park heritage registration www.environment.act.gov.au/.

R Clough and J Gray (1964) *Landscaping Lake Burley Griffin*. Instit Parks Admin Conf, Canberra.

J Ramsay and H Feng (2011) 'Space is not nothing: aesthetics and the struggle for space.'
Proc 17th General Assembly and Scientific Symposium of ICOMOS, France.

Juliet Ramsay has a background in landscape architecture and heritage assessment and management experience with Australian landscapes and overseas. She is the convener of the Lake Burley Griffin Guardians.



Anne Claoue-Long is a historian who has worked on many heritage landscape issues. She was part of the team which undertook the heritage assessment of Lake Burley Griffin in 2010.





Selfheal: native wildflower or invasive exotic?

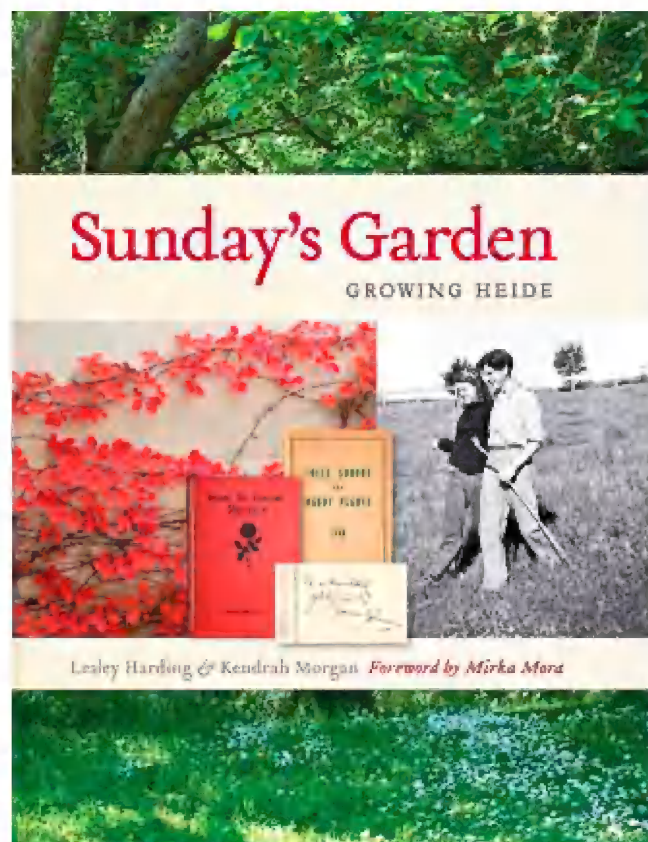
John Dwyer

View north from Heide, home of John and Sunday Reed from the 1930s to 1960s. Through the Reeds, Heide was the central point of a circle of artists, writers and intellectuals.

photo Albert Tucker
Albert Tucker Photographic Collection, Heide Museum of Modern Art & State Library of Victoria

When reading *Sunday's Garden: growing Heide* (2012) by Heide curators Lesley Harding and Kendrah Morgan, I was struck by a passage on using plants native to Australia that set out advice given by the assistant government botanist, James Willis (1910–95).

The book reproduced Willis's handwritten letter of 27 February 1967 to John Reed, who had asked for advice about the indigenous flora of the Yarra River flats in the vicinity of Banksia Street. John and Sunday Reed had been gardening at Heide in Melbourne's east for more than 30 years, but in the 1960s Australian plants had become highly fashionable.



Willis set out a list he had made in 1930 (see next page) of ‘the native riverside plants still to be found on the Heidelberg side’. Among the ‘Swamp Herbs & Water Plants’ he included *Prunella vulgaris* or ‘selfheal’, a plant associated with humans in Europe since prehistoric times. Was this plant, I wondered, really indigenous to Australia?

Selfheal and its cultural history

Selfheal is a perennial herb, often hairy. In lawns or closely grazed pastures the stems are prostrate and frequently root at the nodes. The dense, oblong-shaped spikes of flowers are usually deep purple-blue or violet.

The distinctive shape of the flowers inspired Culpeper to describe them as ‘thicke set together like an eare or spiky knap’. That Victorian arbiter of taste John Ruskin (1819–1900), although holding the flower ‘very dear and precious’, and praising the ‘fine purple gleam of its hooded blossoms’, was critical of it on aesthetic grounds.

As its common name suggests, selfheal was once an important therapeutic plant. Its leaves were used in poultices to dress skin wounds, and a syrup made with the flowers and leaves was thought to cure inflammation of the throat and tonsils. Culpeper in *The complete herbal* (1653) referred to a proverb of the Germans, French and others, ‘That he needs neither physician nor surgeon that hath selfheal and Sanicle ... to help himself’.

By the mid-19th century selfheal had fallen out of favour. In *Outlines of botany* (1835), Burnett wrote that it had ‘ceased to be a vulnerary [used for healing wounds] in all except its name’, although according to *Medicinal plants of the world* (2005) selfheal is still a traditional wound-healing plant in Europe and is used in China for liver and gall problems. And in *Ireland’s generous nature* (2014) Peter Wyse Jackson writes of selfheal’s medicinal uses in Ireland (where the plant is very common), including the treatment of fevers in children.

Distribution

Selfheal is found in pastures, on banks and in moist situations, throughout Europe, North America and central and northern Asia, ranging from the Arctic regions to the tropical mountains of America and Asia, as well as in Australia.

In Britain it is abundant in open woods, grassy habitats, meadows, pastures, road verges, lawns and cultivated land, where it flowers in summer and autumn. It is a common constituent of pastures and is sometimes an aggressive weed in turf, and can be somewhat of an invasive nuisance, especially in pasture and lawns.

But is it native to Australia?

Botanists have changed their opinions on this over time. In *A handbook to plants in Victoria* (1962), Willis treated selfheal as native to Australia (as well as occurring in British, European and other floras). Earlier writers had done the same: Hannaford’s *Jottings in Australia* (1856) listed *Prunella vulgaris*, found in ‘grassy situations’, as a native, as did Ewart’s *Flora of Victoria* (1930), which added that it was ‘almost cosmopolitan’.

More recent publications also suggest that *P. vulgaris* is of cosmopolitan distribution, or that it was introduced in Victoria – or that both of these apply. Auld and Medd in *Weeds* (1997) list it as ‘cosmopolitan’, noting that ‘*P. vulgaris* is widespread in Australia and throughout the world’. Randall’s *A global compendium of weeds* gives the plant’s origin as ‘Eurasia’, but also describes it as a weed, noxious weed, native weed, garden escape, and environmental weed. The CSIRO *handbook of Australian weeds* (1997) lists it as an introduced and naturalised weed.

In both the *Flora of Victoria* (1999) and *Weeds of the south-east* (2011), *P. vulgaris* is shown as naturalised, and a widespread weed.

Brunella vulgaris, from Johann Sturm’s *Deutschlands flora in abbildungen* illus. Jacob Sturm. Selfheal was thought to cure an inflammation of the mouth known in German as ‘die Breuen’, common among soldiers when in camp, especially in garrisons.





ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS AND NATIONAL HERBARIUM

TELEPHONES—
83 7030
83 0938

REF

Mr. John Reed,
Heide, Bulleen, Vic.

SOUTH YARRA, B.E.1
VICTORIA
AUSTRALIA

27th February, 1967

Dear Mr Reed,

I have your inquiry of February 24th concerning the indigenous flora of the Yarra River flats in the vicinity of Banksia Street. I doubt whether we shall ever know exactly how this countryside looked in its pristine glory, for it has been profoundly altered by man during the past 120 years. However, I lived at Banksia Street for a few months in 1927 (40 years ago), and came back there for a holiday in 1930. During the latter occasion, I made a list of the native riverside plants still to be found on the Heidelberg side. Here are the items noted down at the time :-

TREES

<i>Eucalyptus</i>	<i>Acacia</i>	<i>Casuarina</i>
<i>camaldulensis</i> (Red Gum)	<i>dealbata</i> (Silver Wattle)	<i>stricta</i>
<i>vitellina</i> (Manna Gum)	<i>maritima</i> (Black Wattle)	(Drooping She-oak)
<i>ovata</i> (Swamp Gum)	[syn. <i>A. mollissima</i>]	<i>littoralis</i> (Black She-oak)
<i>Metaseua ericifolia</i>	<i>melanoxylon</i> (Blackwood)	[syn. <i>C. suberosa</i>]
(Swamp Paperbark)	<i>implexa</i> (Lightwood)	

TALL SHRUBS

<i>Callistemon</i>	<i>Hymenocallis</i>	<i>Hakea sericea</i>
<i>paludosus</i> (River Bottle-brush)	<i>dentata</i> (Tree Violet)	(Thicket Needlewood)
<i>Leptospermum</i>	<i>Bursaria spinosa</i>	<i>Coprosma</i>
<i>lanigerum</i> (Woolly Tea-tree)	(Sweet Bursaria)	<i>quadrifida</i>
<i>Acacia armata</i> (Kangaroo Thorn)	<i>Solanum aviculare</i>	(Prickly Currant-bush)
<i>Prostanthera</i>	(Kangaroo Apple)	<i>Plagianthus</i>
<i>lasiantha</i> (Christmas Bush)	<i>Pomaderris</i>	<i>polkellus</i>
	<i>apetala</i> (Hazel Pomaderris)	(Common Hemp-bush)
	? <i>prunifolia</i>	
	(Plum-leaf Pomaderris)	

LOW SHRUBS & SEMI-SHRUBS

<i>Goodenia ovata</i>	<i>Rubus parvifolius</i>	<i>Pelargonium australe</i> (Natal Storkbill)
(Hop Goodenia)	(Small-leaf Bramble)	<i>Amyema pendula</i>
		(Drooping Mistletoe)

HERBS OF DRIER GROUND

<i>Viola hederacea</i>	<i>Acaena anserinifolia</i>	<i>Rhagodia nutans</i>
(Ivy-leaf Violet)	(Bridget-widgee)	(Trailing or Nodding Saltbush)

SWAMP HERBS & WATER PLANTS

<i>Mentha australis</i>	<i>Polygonum</i>	<i>Callitriche stagnalis</i>
(Australian Mint)	<i>minus</i> (Slender Knotweed)	(Water Starwort)
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	<i>lapathifolium</i> (Pale Knotweed)	<i>Phragmites communis</i>
(Self-heal)	<i>strigosum</i> (Spotted Knotweed)	(Common Reed)
<i>Rorippa islandica</i>	<i>hydropiper</i> (Water-piper)	<i>Typha angustifolia</i>
(Yellow Water-cress)	[Thus several species of rushes, <i>Juncus</i> spp.]	(Reed-mace)
		<i>Triglochin procera</i>
		(Water-ribbons)

On lagoons at North Kew there was also *Marsilea drummondii* (Nardoo), *Ottelia ovalifolia* (Swamp Lily) and *Myriophyllum spicatum* (Water Milfoil).

Trusting this may be of some assistance to you,

Yours sincerely, J. H. Willis

Nationality and plants

If selfheal was introduced to Australia, it is likely that its introduction and spread was linked to long established use in folk medicine. There is an interesting passage based on the American frontier experience in George Perkins Marsh's *Man and nature* (1864). In his chapter on the accidental introduction of plants, Marsh wrote of accidental acts in which an emigrant on a journey across the western plains or Great Plains, may 'scatter upon the ground the seeds he designed for his garden, and the herbs which fill so important a place in the rustic materia medica of the Eastern States, spring up along the prairie paths but just opened by the caravan of the settler'.

Settlers in the Australian colonies are likely to have brought with them herbs or simples for their 'rustic *materia medica*', including selfheal. Georgiana McCrae provides an example of the use of medicinal plants by colonists in Victoria.

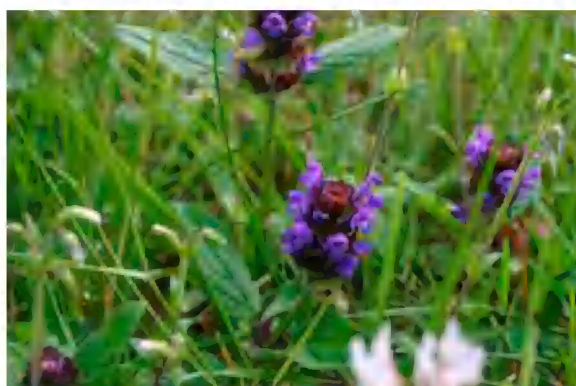
In a letter of 19 July 1846 describing her cottage on Arthur's Seat and her life there, she wrote of becoming a famous 'medicine woman' with patients arriving from as far away as The Heads (the entrance to Port Phillip Bay): 'Seldom ill ourselves; the worst sickness, scarletina (scarlet fever), yielded to simples, and dishes of saffron tea.'¹

The significance of a plant's status

Does it matter whether selfheal is native or exotic? A desire to use native plants in a garden is legitimate, but the native/exotic divide can have wider consequences. Because many now argue that naturalised introduced plants should be removed as invasive alien species, from the plant's point of view the distinction may be a matter of life or death.

There is a large and growing body of publications in the field of invasion biology, where a bias against introduced plants is frequently demonstrated, and has been described as 'a kind of irrational xenophobia about invading ... plants that resembles the inherent fear and intolerance of foreign races, cultures and religions'.² My article 'Willows and the Australian landscape' (*Australian Garden History* vol 29 no 3, 2017) gave examples of the consequences of such a bias for cultural landscapes. The native/alien dichotomy applies to plants concepts of nationality developed in 19th century English law. But plants do not have allegiances or nationality and should not be judged by their origins.³

I explore this further in my next article, which is on nardoo (*Marsilea* spp.).

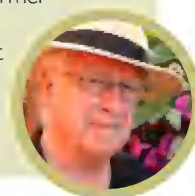


Prunella vulgaris flowers and leaves.

photo Sten Porse, Wiki Commons 2005

- 1 J Dwyer (2006) 'Medicinal herbs and weeds in colonial Victoria'. In C Preston and others, eds *Proceedings of the 15th Australian Weeds Conference*. Weed Management Society of SA.
- 2 J Brown (1989) 'Patterns, modes and extents of invasions by vertebrates'. In JA Drake and others, eds *Biological invasions: a global perspective*. Wiley, NY.
- 3 MA Davis and others (2011) 'Don't judge species on their origin'. *Nature* 474(7350): 153–4.

Dr John Dwyer is a retired QC and a former chair of AGHS. His publications include articles in *Australian Garden History* about weeds and landscape. His talk 'War on weeds' at the AGHS 2018 conference attracted vigorous comment.



Opposite page: JH (Jim) Willis's letter of 27 February 1967 to John Reed at Heide, listing '*Prunella vulgaris* Self-heal' among the indigenous plants of the Yarra River flats.

Reed papers, State Library of Victoria, image supplied courtesy Heide archives



Ekaterina Heath

Joseph Banks and British botanical diplomacy

Semen Shchedrin,
*View of the Trellice
and the Marienthal
pond, 1790, Pavlovsk
Palace museum,
St Petersburg.*
photo Mark Tedeschi

Sir Joseph Banks, botanist and supporter of the British settlement of New South Wales, turned the exchange of plants into a political strategy aimed at supporting the interests of the British Empire. Australian plants played a significant role in this process, helping to articulate various diplomatic messages. A gift from Banks to Grand Duchess Maria Feodorovna of Russia in 1795 was among the earliest significant botanical diplomatic gifts of live plants in Europe.

In the second half of the 1790s, visitors to the Russian Grand Duchess Maria Feodorovna's estate at Pavlovsk near St Petersburg walked down an expansive allée leading from the palace

to two hothouses strategically built nearby. By locating the hothouses so close to the palace, Maria Feodorovna (1759–1828) ensured that they were significant features, visited by most people who came to the park.

One hothouse contained unique plants in clay pots marked 'GR' in reference to King George III of Great Britain. Sizeable in number and unusual in looks, the plants were a memorable sight, arranged in an orderly fashion with wooden sticks indicating their exotic names. The plants were a diplomatic gift sent in 1795 by Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society, on behalf of King George. The scale of the gift was vast, and almost all of the plants involved were new to Russia.

This botanical gift of diplomatic significance began a trend that would last until the end of

Banks' life and career. The opportunity to see rare and precious species from the southern hemisphere in one of the coldest capital cities in Europe was testament to Maria Feodorovna's powerful international connections and the skill of the gardeners sent by Banks to accompany the plants.

Diplomatic background

The gift was initiated in 1793 by the British envoy in Saint Petersburg, Sir Charles Whitworth. It signalled an improved relationship between Russia and Great Britain, who had been on the verge of war following the Ochakov crisis just two years earlier.

It is astounding that the plants were sent to Maria Feodorovna instead of Catherine the Great, who was widely known for her botanical interests. Whitworth would have been well aware of the hostile attitude of Catherine to her son's family and their estate at Pavlovsk. But Catherine was ageing, and Maria Feodorovna's own passion for botany was well known. The crafty diplomat might have observed her use of Pavlovsk to influence and gain favours from her soon to be Tsar husband.

The shift from giving precious jewellery to plants reflected the change in Britain's understanding of itself and its role in the world. It has been argued that diplomatic gift exchange in early modern Europe was based on the natural riches and artistic developments of different countries. With the new focus on science and economics, Joseph Banks and others were keen to use botany and agronomy for the prosperity of the British Empire.

Potted plants

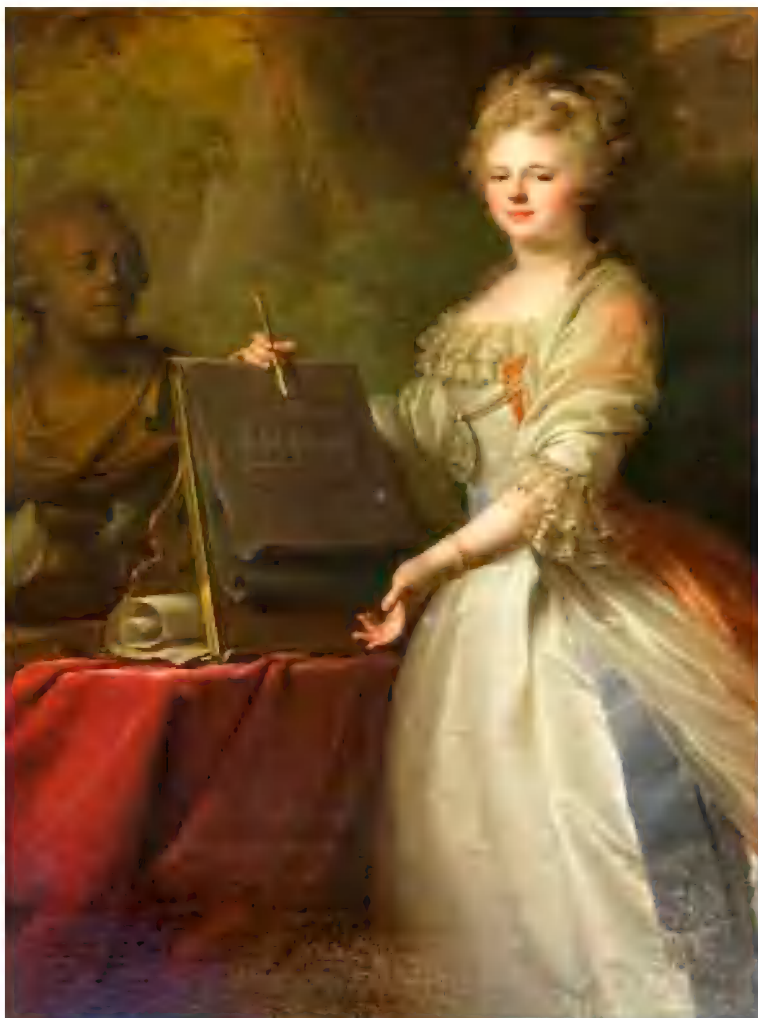
Although riskier than seeds, the choice to send plants in pots shows Banks's desire to create a magnificent visual impact – a box of seeds cannot be compared to the sight of two hundred fully grown exotic plants. The plants were delivered in peak form, close to flowering. Banks wished to surprise and overwhelm Russian courtiers, both with the sight of the plants and with their arrival unscathed from a long and perilous journey. It was a tribute to the achievements of British gardening and its merchant navy.

Celebrating the Empire

Banks's aim is clear from the choice of plants. On 6 May 1795, he wrote that he had received

Left: Johann Baptist Lampi, *Portrait of Grand Duchess Maria Feodorovna*, 1795, Pavlovsk Palace museum, St Petersburg. photo Mark Tedeschi

Right: A Cardon, after Sir Thomas Lawrence, *Sir Joseph Banks*, engraving 1810. Royal Botanic Gardens Kew



‘the King’s commands to select as compleat a collection of exotic plants as can be possibly be spared’. The novelty of the plants selected was a vital element of the gift. They needed to be ‘in the early state of cultivation’ – new plants recently discovered by British plant collectors. The plants represented the latest achievement of British horticulture and turned the gift into a symbol of scientific power. They came from all parts of the world where the British Empire was present, most coming from two territories of critical importance to Great Britain’s imperial expansion and accumulation of natural resources – the Cape of Good Hope and Australia.

Strelitzia reginae

The gift included a large collection of South African plants that just 15 years earlier had transformed the look of British gardens. There was a wide variety of ericas (heaths), proteas and pelargoniums.

Strelitzia reginae was at the top of Banks’s list. It was introduced to Britain by Francis Masson from South Africa in 1772. Joseph Banks named it in honour of Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (1744–1818), Queen Consort of George III. The precious and rare plant connected Maria Feodorovna with Queen Charlotte, a fellow

German princess passionate about botany and a supporter of Kew Gardens. Banks wrote to government official Thomas Burges:

At the head of the list you will find the *strelitzia reginae* which on account of the difficulty of increasing it is here considered as one of the most rare and certainly is one of the most beautiful plants in Europe. I know of one plant of it that has lately been procured by purchase, which was imported from Holland last year and this ... is said to have cost the proprietor Fourty Pounds Sterling.

New Zealand flax

Two other plants that Banks singled out as the focus of the gift were New Zealand flax (*Phormium tenax*) and *Brucea antidysenterica*. New Zealand flax was first seen by Banks during Captain Cook’s circumnavigation. Its strong natural fibres were much better than other types of flax produced at that time. He believed that by growing this plant in New South Wales, the British economy would no longer have to depend on Russian flax, an essential material for the navy. The special significance of the plant was well understood by the Duchess and her husband, who received the plant in the palace instead of in the garden where they observed the rest of the plants.

View towards the Temple of Friendship in the grounds of the Pavlovsk Palace.
photo Mark Tedeschi



‘She [the Grand Duchess] had ordered him into the drawing room to shew the Botany Bay flax.’

The tropical African plant *Brucea antidysenterica* was considered a cure for dysentery because of its astringent properties. Dysentery was particularly dangerous for soldiers and sailors on military campaigns. Given the scale of Russian military activities in the 18th and 19th centuries, the plant was of considerable value and had potential to improve Russian military might. When combined with the naval connotations of the flax gift, a proposal of combined forces can be seen to be presented, with Great Britain desiring to have Russia support its European conflicts.

The counter-gift

Gift exchange is burdened by mutual obligations. A present from Great Britain bound Maria Feodorovna to respond appropriately. Unlike Catherine II, she was not able to reciprocate with a similarly magnificent gift to George III. Financial constraints reflecting her subordinate role in the imperial court meant that the gift she sent back to Kew comprised ‘25 plants and 180 different seeds ... but most of them ... already in England excepting the *Rhododendron chrysanthemum*’. It was an almost identical reciprocal number to that of the plants she had received from Kew. But these were mostly in seed form, promising no visual impact upon arrival in Great Britain.

Possible consequences

An unequal exchange of gifts was a veiled desire on Britain’s part to acquire power over a seemingly pliable member of the Russian royal family, who would become an empress. The gift’s prominent place in the Grand Duchess’s garden was a demonstration of gratitude and a long-term commitment to collaboration between the royal families of both countries. Maria Feodorovna instantly recognised the value of the gift she had received by showing the plants to 70 courtiers on the day they arrived in Russia.

Such a gift would have been a European acknowledgment of her passion for botany and her desire to play a role in international politics. It assisted her to overcome the marginalised position in which she found herself at the Russian court during this period and to establish herself as a person of significance. Quite an outcome from one diplomatic gift, proving that botany as a tool for diplomacy had far greater capability than its jewelled competitor.



Left: Austrian botanical artist Franz Bauer's *Strelitzia reginae*, Bird-of-paradise, coloured lithograph from *Strelitzia depicta*, vol 1, London, 1818.

Royal Botanic Gardens Kew

Below: Martha King (1803?–1897) The *phormium tenax*, or New Zealand flax. Drawn by Miss King. [1842] Day & Haghe. London, Smith, Elder [1845].

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington NZ



Dr Ekaterina Heath is a junior research fellow in garden studies at the University of Sydney. She is the author of ‘Sowing the seeds for strong relations’ in Jennifer Milam, ed (2017) *Cosmopolitan moments: instances of exchange in the long eighteenth century*.





Patience Wardle

The Spinney, 2 Mugga Way, Red Hill

Front garden of
The Spinney,
Mugga Way, 1970.

All photos from the
Patience Australie
Wardle (Tillyard)
collection held by the
Canberra and District
Historical Society

This is the story of a Canberra house and garden that disappeared after a comparatively short life of 35 years, and of its sole owner, my mother, Mrs Patricia Tillyard.

At the western, unpopulated end of Mugga Way, my mother and father liked the look of the small plantation — oak, pine and sorbus. Adjoining the plantation was a vacant three-quarter acre block. Enquiries from CS Daley at the Department of the Interior revealed that the plantation was a reserve, never to be built upon, and further, that the Department was delighted at anyone expressing interest in the oddly shaped building block.

My parents engaged a new architect, Malcolm J Moir, to design a suitable house for the new block. His assistant, Heather Sutherland, drew the plans for The Spinney. She produced a modern house of great charm which fitted into its background on the slopes of Red Hill. The Spinney block sloped gently up from Mugga Way so that the house's long, sunny facade had a wide view down over the then bare valley with Mount Ainslie forming the northern limit of the vista from the house.

Starting the garden

The basic garden plan was worked out well in advance with the first plantings, probably in the winter of 1936, of the two magnificent scarlet

oaks, the Canadian oak, that were the glory of the plantation they bordered. At first the brand-new house sat uncomfortably on its piece of paddock with its raw aspect softened by the grassy bulk of Red Hill along the southern boundary. By the summer of 1937–38, I remember a regiment of Christmas lilies four and five feet high in the new bed under the windows of the dining alcove. Very soon, in the virgin soil that roses seemed to like, a Marion Manifold ran up the front wall of the house, and a row of hybrid tea roses – Ophelia, Black Boy, Texas Centennial, President Hoover, Madame Dupont – was planted in the long bed between the driveway and the front lawn. An akebia was planted to the left of the front door and soon made a thick green hood for the little porch – fragrant in spring, profligate of leaves and the suspected source of spiders that unfailingly made their way inside.

Two bignonia grandifloras were put in, one at the living-room corner, one outside the main bedroom, and provided a mass of apricot-gold trumpet flowers at Christmas-time. At the garage corner of the drive one of our tributes to New Zealand, a fine cabbage-tree, flourished throughout The Spinney's life.

Behind the low stone wall in front, Mother had a colourful bed of perennials: the old floribunda Dorothy Perkins, red-hot poker, iris stylosa, a cheerful scarlet japonica, flag iris and ceratostigma, with royal blue flowers in summer and crimson foliage in autumn. At either end of the long narrow bed we planted a Roman cypress: these babies grew to thirty-foot trees and maintained their elegant shape until felled in 1979.

The bank between the drive and the lawn became a spring and summer glory of catmint, campanula, snow-in-summer, gazanias and other cheerful ground covers. Beneath the climbing roses Mother

grew pinks, candytuft, scabious, heuchera and oriental and Shirley poppies, these last in the happy half-belief that some of them might be opium poppies and illicit.

The short, upwards, eastern arm of the gravelled driveway was screened by a row of Mexican thorn, jasmine, may and weigela. An almond tree went in by the letterbox and the water meter, but the parrots saw to it that no almonds were ever harvested, sitting in the branches and neatly cracking the green shells which they then threw on to the drive, carking with satisfaction.

The bed at the opposite, western end of the lawn had rose bushes backing on to what became a thicket of jasmine and winter honeysuckle. My mother put sparaxis along the edge of the drive, and these hardy little bulbs spilled over into the gravel, even in time crossing the drive to the end of the lawn.

The two extremities of the block were planted with young cypresses which gave in the course of years a good thick screening hedge, though we amateur hedge-cutters never achieved the geometrical symmetry of the professional shearers. Behind the western hedge, bordering on the plantation, we put in a Spanish mulberry, pussy willow, Arbutus unedo, and rhus, to form a little secret lawn. For many years, until the trees became too overarching, this was a fine place for a quiet sunbathe or a read. A path bordered with winter honeysuckle, buzzing with bees in the cold weather, led up to the terrace.

The garden's glory

The terrace and the grass path from it into the plantation were the glory of the garden, in Kipling's phrase. One stepped out of the living-room's western French windows on to a bricked pavement. Two wide shallow steps gave

Left: Honor Joseph, youngest daughter of Patricia Tillyard, with the autumn colours, The Spinney, 1970.

Right: The Spinney in a snowstorm, ca 1965.



Left: Author Pat Wardle (right) with her mother Mrs Patricia Tillyard at The Spinney, ca 1960.

Right top: Elevated view of the front garden of The Spinney, 1970.

Right bottom: The back garden of The Spinney, with its conveniently waist-high herb bed, ca 1960.

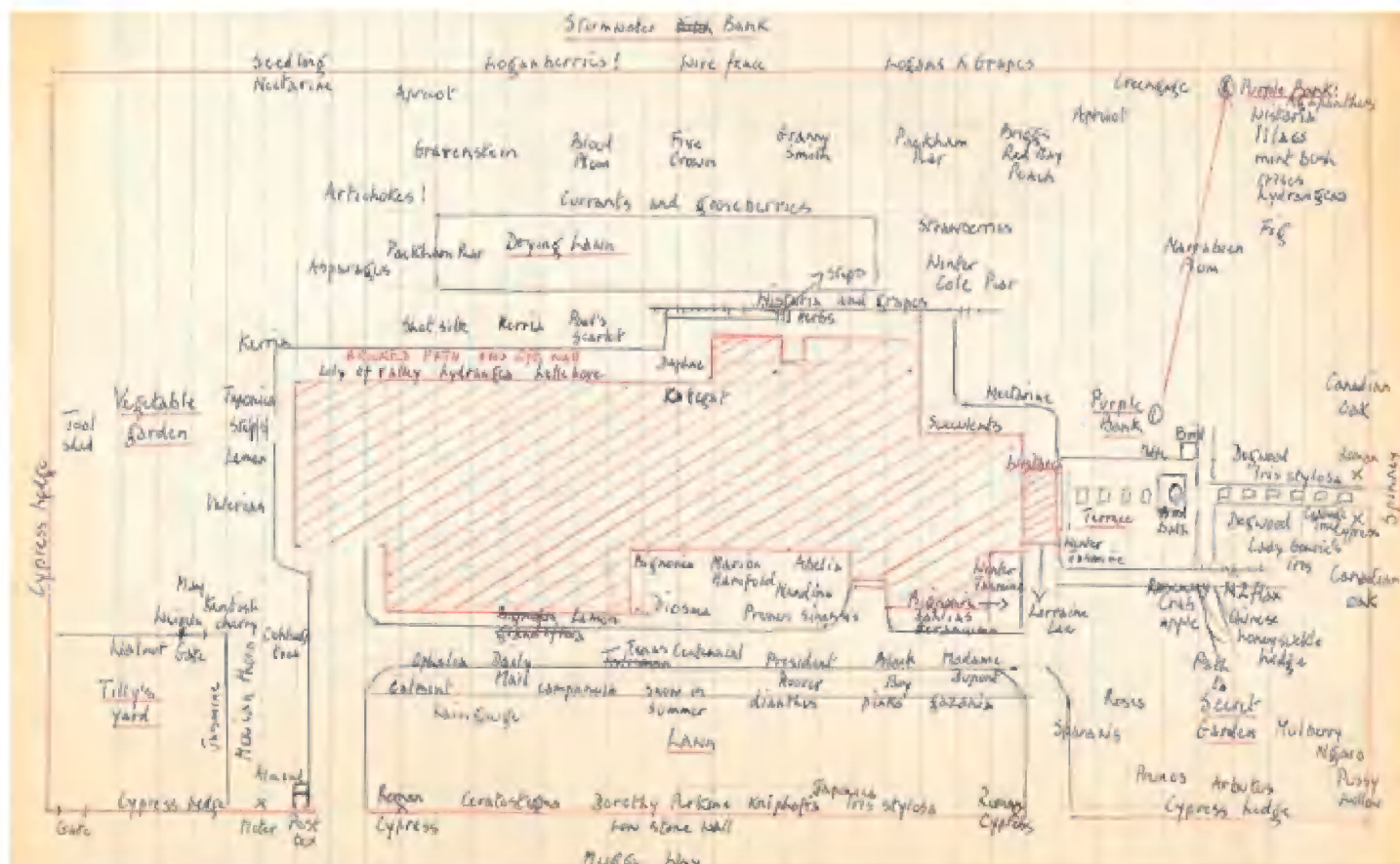


access to a small lawn in the middle of which was a square bed, with a graceful birdbath on a low brick plinth. The bed was planted with geraniums and pentstemons and had a border of annuals such as pansies. Bricks set in threes to form steps led to it, around it and on down the grass path. On the left the slope became known as the Purple Bank because it was covered with lilacs, English and Persian, blue agapanthus, New Zealand veronicas (koromiko) and a huge wisteria. Clumps of helenium and chrysanthemum set off the rickety little bird table at the end of the Purple Bank. Beyond the terrace lawn, to left and right, were Canadian dogwoods. Bulbs popped up everywhere — sweet-scented jonquils and paper narcissi, clumps of daffodils, grape hyacinths — and there were Lady Gowrie's fine flag irises given to Mother by that most loved Governor-General's wife from the Government House garden during the war. On either side of the grass path were clumps of iris stylosa, the little blue winter flowerer, which with twigs from a great mass of winter jasmine provided a bowl of flowers even in the coldest weather. I have seen that jasmine flowering gaily through a sparkling crust of snow.

Beside the clump of New Zealand flax a crabapple was put in, a huge tree covered in spring with sweet-scented old-rose flowers that the bees loved, and providing in late summer pounds of small fruit for crab-apple jelly. Beneath it my mother planted a little rosemary hedge. This hedge was never too satisfactory, probably because it was in the shade of the big crabapple, but it was always there to provide a scented sprig for the posies my mother loved to make up.

Looking out from the living-room, one's eye travelled restfully along the terrace lawn and the grass path to a sentinel pair of Roman cypresses, the Canadian oaks and the sunshine and shade of the little plantation or spinney after which the house was named. It was a big block, but the invisibility of the boundary between garden and plantation gave it an added spaciousness, almost a limitlessness.

During the early wartime summers the living-room was uncomfortably hot in spite of canvas blinds at the westerly windows and doors. In fact the house was intolerable in that appalling summer of 1939, when bushfires blazed in south-eastern Australia and it reached 106.8 degrees Fahrenheit in the Federal Capital. The heat problem was virtually solved by the erection of a sturdy frame of hardwood beams jutting out from above the doors and covering the flat space between the house and the terrace steps. On to this my mother trained a wisteria, and in 1950, added a Lorraine Lee for the other corner post. Like the other Spinney roses, only more so, Lorraine grew like Jack's beanstalk,



mingled happily with the wisteria and provided a marvellous summer shelter of greenery. In the winter both vine and rose were bare, so that the sunshine poured in unhindered. When I had the pruning of Lorraine Lee, I sawed her back unmercifully, year after year, but like the crabapple she flourished the more under this treatment.

Productive edibles

At the back, bricked steps led up from the kitchen door to the garden above, and at chest level herbs grew, handy for a quick sprig for the kitchen. Along the wall towards the Purple Bank were grapes: there were more grapes along the back fence. Along the upper border of the lawn were Mother's gooseberry and black and red currant bushes, English oddities that always intrigued Australian visitors, though they did enjoy her currant fruit juices and redcurrant jelly. A long line of fruit trees extended the full length of the garden: a nectarine on the southern fence line, Packham pear, Five Crown, Gravenstein, Cox's Orange pippin (unhappy in our climate and later replaced by a heavily bearing blood plum), two Granny Smiths, another Packham, Winter Cole (the sweet little late brown pear which we had loved in New Zealand), a Briggs Early May and a Red May peach, a huge apricot tree that bore quantities of a rather pale, large fruit, a quince, and a Narrabeen plum.

In the early years the Spinney fruit trees were professionally treated. Phil Champion, from Mereworth in Kent, was farming at Weetangerra and pruned the young trees English-fashion, to a shallow, cup-shape, to catch the best of the sun, whereas Australian orchardists pruned upwards, more like a glass, to lessen the effect of the summer heat.

My Mother's garden was well used, from the Secret Garden where in the early years one could spread a rug and sunbathe or swing in a hammock in perfect privacy, to gatherings of her friends, drinking cups of tea of wicked strength and exchanging news at the tops of their voices.

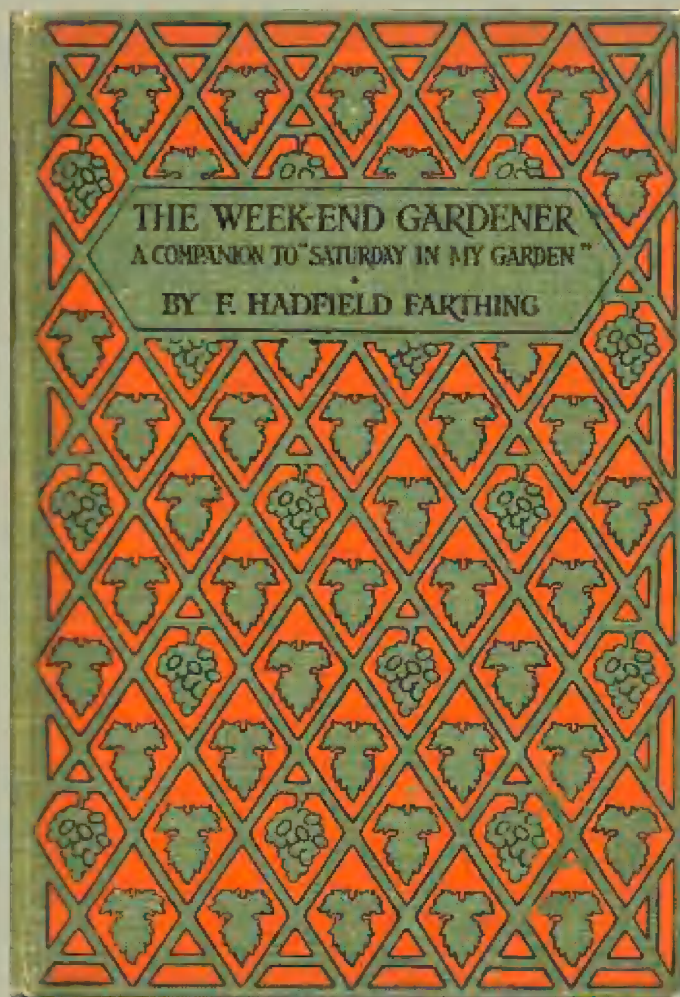
My mother died in 1971. Shortly before her death she wrote:

My life has been blessed with many good friends and wonderful friendships, being fortunate to fetch up in this rapidly growing, exciting city.

Her garden was a constant in this life.

Historian and diarist **Patience (Pat) Wardle** (1910–92) was a foundation member of the Canberra and District Historical Society. This article was prepared for publication by Pat's step-grandson David Wardle (also of the Canberra and District Historical Society), using the manuscript 'My mother's house' by Patience Wardle. A further extract from this manuscript will be published in the March 2019 issue of the *Canberra Historical Journal*.

Garden plan for The Spinney, ca 1970.



Robert Darby

The week-end gardener: two schoolboys in the 1960s

It was an English book, so you had to reverse the seasons, but if you were an Australian schoolboy in the 1960s, and such a big sissy that you preferred flowers to football, *The week-end gardener* was the essential guide. I was one such, and my friend Anthony Bishop was another.

We met in Form III (Year 9) at one of Melbourne's independent schools. Although we were best friends for a couple of years, we never called each other Robert or Anthony, much less Rob or Tony; it was always Darby and Bishop, as befitted the Edwardian gentlemen we were learning

to become. We spent much of our free time together, sometimes doing normal boy things such as breeding guinea pigs, burning sulphur in the back garden and experimentally inhaling the fumes, catching insects, watching birds and going to the beach. But more often we engaged in the sort of unmanly activities that would have provoked sermons like the one which denounced Oscar Wilde's fear that he might fail to live up to his blue china.

Not only did we occasionally attend church together, but we liked cooking, and Bishop once made a cinnamon omelette for me. We had quite a taste for exotic foods, and discovered delicacies like rose hip and peppermint tea, stilton cheese, olives and smoked fish long before such items became common in supermarkets. It was a time when most of the boys we knew thought the ultimate gastronomic treat was a pie without the vegetables.

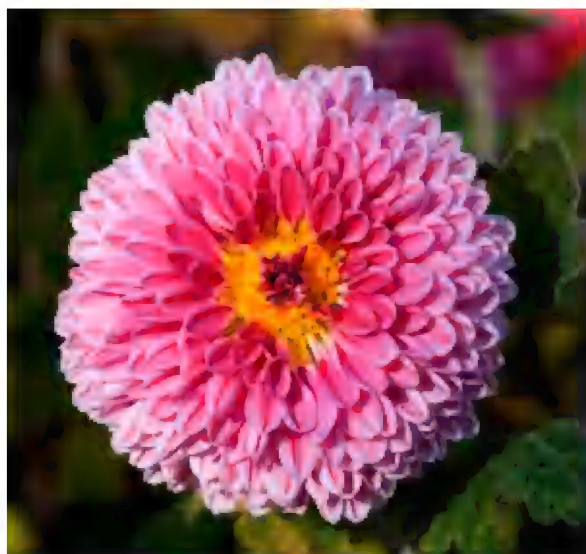
The common interest that really sealed our friendship, and set us apart from most of the other boys, was our love of plants and flowers. We compared gardening notes, showed off our floral triumphs, discussed soil mixes and worried about caterpillars. We haunted Melbourne's nurseries in search of new and exotic items, and found more than we expected, often affordable. Although water restrictions in the great Melbourne drought of 1967-68 made it difficult to keep plants alive, they also made them cheap, since nurseries faced the same problem, and were throwing out stock for a song. We picked up any number of bargains: dozens of Tom Thumb tomatoes in beautiful terracotta pots, ixias, irises, fuchsias, carnations, and even the rare crown of thorns (*Euphorbia milii*), which thrived in the dry conditions.

We wrote off for catalogues, and spent hours poring over lists of tulips, daffodils, begonias, bromeliads, peonies and other beauties. After school we sometimes crossed Domain Road to explore the Botanic Gardens, especially the rarities in the glasshouses, where we found tropical luxuriance, carnivorous pitcher plants, sundews much larger than those which grew in the bush near Melbourne, and the amazing *Mimosa pudica*, whose delicate leaflets drooped in shame or terror when you touched them. Gardening had long been a passion of mine, and to find a fellow-enthusiast in our sport-crazy school was like finding a whelk stall in the desert, as the washerwoman remarks in one of Saki's stories. But here Bishop was well ahead, because he possessed a copy of *The Book*.

The busy gardener

The week-end gardener — a week by week guide to garden creation and maintenance by F Hadfield Farthing FRHS, was first published in 1914. It breathed a spirit of both Edwardian optimism and Protestant industry: easy-care gardens were not on the author's radar screen, and one doubts whether anybody who adhered to his routines would have any time left to relax and enjoy the results, or even the energy to get to work on Monday. Dig the celery trenches, build the incinerator, prune the roses, pot the chrysanthemums, plant the lily bulbs, bed the annuals, prepare the seedling mix, train the nasturtiums, fight the wire worms ... It is easy to see there was no television in those days. On *'April: the first week-end'* one's duties were to get the main crop vegetables in, attend to roses post-pruning, and plant out sweet peas. 'If March has been a busy month for the amateur gardener', wrote HF, 'then April promises to be even busier. Now that spring is fairly launched, every favourable opportunity for catching up arrears must be seized if order and method are to be preserved'.

'September, third week-end' covered violas, hydrangeas from cuttings, and arum lilies, while the next weekend was devoted to plants for a shady garden, and the rules for housing chrysanthemums. And if that wasn't demanding enough, the second weekend in June was introduced with the confident announcement that 'in well-ordered gardens the arduous, but always fascinating task of designing, preparing and planting summer flower beds will by now have been completed ... As the gardener surveys his handiwork, and confidently awaits a satisfactory issue to the many months of anxious care and strenuous labour that have gone towards ensuring it, he may be tempted to rest awhile on his oars ...



This, however, is false reasoning' — yet more hard work lay ahead. At times like these he sounded like our solemn headmaster, who never wearied of urging diligence in the fulfilment of our obligations.

The book was illustrated with fuzzy photos of lavender walks, herbaceous borders, rose gardens and novelties such as crazy paving. It was studded with weather observations, particularly lamentations about 'too much rain': a poignant reference at a time when I carried buckets of rinse water from the washing to throw on our parched shrubs during the 1967 drought.

The good earth

We were not especially interested in HF's advice on how to dig asparagus trenches or train sweet peas, but we warmed to his instructions on how to make loam from beech leaves and turf, propagate fuchsias, grow plants from seed and get the best out of chrysanthemums and carnations. Soil quality was of particular concern to me, as the grey earth at our place in Malvern seemed too light and impoverished to sustain the sort of Eden I yearned to create, and I constantly nagged my parents to buy truckloads of good brown mountain soil, or at least a few sacks of manure.

I spent my pocket money on bags of blood and bone, ammonium sulphate, lupin seeds, liquid fertiliser and any other supplement I could afford, all lugged home from the shops in my straining schoolbag, or balanced precariously on the pack rack of my bike. Beautiful brown loam was the main attraction of the holiday house Bishop's parents owned near Noojee, in the hills to the east of Melbourne, and I lived in hope that we would be taken there for a weekend. Eventually we were, but we found the mountain soil much harder to dig than we expected, and a sack of it more than the two of us could carry.



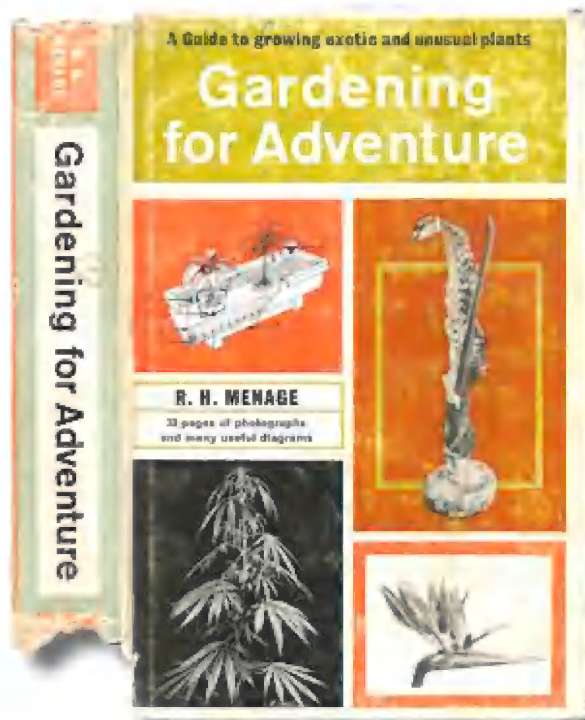
Far left: The chrysanthemum, one of the many flowers beloved of the author in his schooldays.

photo Masaki Ikeda, Wikimedia Commons

Left: The crown of thorns *Euphorbia milii*, a native of Madagascar, so called because of its very spiny stems. Photographed in the Medicinal Garden of the Royal College of Physicians, London.

photo Dr Henry Oakeley, Wellcome Collection

... and the book which became the author's bible.



Because I was less intellectually precocious and more self-critical than my friend I sometimes felt overshadowed and too inclined to defer to his opinions. When my mother asked me why I was pulling out a clump of agapanthus that grew in our rock garden, I replied confidently, 'Bishop doesn't like them'. He was not impressed when I selected a book on gardening as a prize at the end of Form III, stating categorically that the only appropriate book choice for a school prize was poetry.

My chance to assert myself came when I found a competitor to *The week-end gardener* in the local public library – *Gardening for adventure*, which soon became my bible. In its enthralling pages I learned of botanical possibilities far surpassing the imagination of suburbia: carnivorous plants, night-blooming creepers, lilies with phallic flowers that smelt of rotten meat, ginkgos, miniature gardens in bottles, green zinnias and cacti reputed to have mind-expanding properties if you dared to swallow the sap.

Where could you obtain such wonders? Imagine my excitement when Bishop produced the seed catalogue of Thompson and Morgan, of Ipswich. Hadfield Farthing knew the joy: '*January: third week-end*. The most attractive sound in the ears of the enthusiastic amateur gardener at this season ... is not the splash of raindrops on the window pane ... but the sharp rat-tat of the postman on the door knocker. This peremptory summons means ... the arrival of yet another sumptuously prepared catalogue from the seedsman and florist.' It might not have been as lavishly illustrated as it was before the Great War, but the Thompson and Morgan catalogue

was still astounding. A gem hunter finding himself inside Aladdin's cave would not have been more enthralled than I was on opening its pages and gazing at its treasures. I wanted everything, but eventually cut my order back to what my limited resources allowed, and waited impatiently for the parcel to arrive by sea, clear quarantine and make its way to our letter box.

Soon seed trays full of potting mix (sand, loam and peat moss in the correct proportions) appeared on every flat surface, and crowded the steps leading down to the lawn. Some I placed under sheets of glass, and the maples went in the fridge because you were meant to freeze them to ensure germination. Results were mixed. Venus flytraps (which required expensive sphagnum moss) did not succeed, nor the maples; but I did grow moonflowers, lots of chrysanthemums and carnations, gourds, Californian poppies, Sturt's desert pea, a couple of ginkgos, and the most beautiful double petunias, in rich shades of mauve and pink. And most amazingly of all, two or three *Mimosa pudica*, the sensitive plant.

Orchid hunts

I'm not sure that Bishop wasn't a little jealous of my successes, and rather pleased about my failures. I wish I could remember what he bought from the miracle merchants, but I think his selections were different from mine, and might well have included seeds of those hallucinogenic cacti. I doubt they grew. He lived way out in the eastern suburbs near Ringwood, on a block with heavy clay soil in a valley shaded by towering gum trees. Azaleas and camellias thrived in the brown loam he brought back from Noojee, but sun-loving plants did not do well. Besides, every time he worked some blood and bone into the ground his dog would dig it up again.

The biggest attraction of his neighbourhood was the possibility of finding native orchids in the remnant bush, and we spent many hours hunting for donkey, cow and spider orchids, and the elegant, elusive greenhoods. On a school hike one autumn another member of our party was about to sit down on one of these treasures, and simply could not understand the ruckus we kicked up, though he did eventually agree to find another spot. 'Bloody hippies', he muttered as he shifted.

Dr Robert Darby is an independent scholar and freelance writer with an interest in many aspects of cultural history. He is the author of a history of the rise and fall of routine circumcision in Britain (*A surgical temptation*) and numerous articles in journals.





Jessica Hood

AGHS SYMPOSIUM – JOADJA CREEK VALLEY, OCTOBER 2018

Fuelling the Fire

Before AGHS's annual conference this year there was a one-day symposium 'Fuelling the Fire' at the incredible cultural landscape of Joadja Creek Valley, 30 km west of Mittagong in NSW's Southern Highlands. The symposium explored ideas around time and conflicting narratives of 'gardening' in the broader landscape, thereby extending the conference theme. Joadja is the location of an abandoned 19th-century kerosene and shale-oil mining town, and is on the NSW Heritage Register.

It is located on the lands of traditional owners the Gundungurra. We were given an acknowledgement of Gundungurra Country by Arakwal Bundjalung woman Melissa Wiya on our arrival. We reflected on the tens of thousands of years of Aboriginal occupation of this land and the continuing connection to country for local Aboriginal communities.

A guided tour of the mining site with the current owners Valero and Elisa Jimenez provided an opportunity to discover the beauty of the valley and learn about its current and proposed future use. The place is incredibly intact as an important example of Australia's mining and industrial heritage while also interpreting the migrant experience of the largely Scottish workforce and their families who lived on site. Constructed as a private town and mine from the 1870s and in

operation until 1911, the site has continued in private ownership since that time. The landscape exhibits extremely rare aspects of technology and habitation that have had very little 20th century intrusion, arguably due to the isolation of the site. We learnt about the unique D-shaped iron retorts and the social lives of the inhabitants, who lived in wooden or brick houses. They regularly gathered together for a wide range of social activities at the School of Arts and had local shops (a butcher and post office) as well as an orchard, now removed, which once covered 67 acres with an incredible 6700 fruit trees.

Valero and Elisa Jimenez, who are of Spanish heritage, are passionate about preserving and showcasing the site in collaboration with the local community and experts. A number of AGHS members have been involved in Wingecarribee Shire's Joadja Trust, including Laurel Cheetham, Charlotte Webb and Dennis McManus. It is clear that the owners take their role as custodians seriously. Despite the complexities of gaining relevant heritage permissions for work, they have already achieved a lot in their short time there. They have conserved and partially reconstructed brick houses in a section of the site named Carrington Row, as well as a few of the chimney stacks, and are working on more substantial plans. Most importantly for ensuring a sustainable future for the property, they have begun a distillery producing

A grove of black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) at Joadja.

photo Jessica Hood



in these plants and custodianship practices. Craig Burton reflected on similar themes, emphasising the need for ongoing consultation with Aboriginal communities. Caroline Grant drew connections to the orchard that once occupied the site, speaking about her research into fruit trees which (with no assistance) survive well beyond the owners who once planted them.

Wrapping up the day, Djon Mundine OAM (Bundjalung) gave us insights into claiming space for Aboriginal communities in the 1988 bicentenary through the creation of the Aboriginal Memorial at the National Gallery of Australia. Through a discussion with the symposium attendees, we considered how Australian society might better engage with Aboriginal culture along with the complex history of Aboriginal massacre sites, with reference to contemporary art, landscape, food and gardening culture.

For me what was highlighted through the day was the complexity of cultural landscapes as connectors of generations over time. The Joadja example demonstrates the complexities of managing the social, economic, environmental and cultural values of a landscape. Most importantly, the panel discussion raised the need for continuing connection of Aboriginal communities in telling the stories of our landscapes. The Gundungurra experience is not yet interpreted on the Joadja site, and through appropriate and meaningful consultation could add another intergenerational layer of history and future for Joadja and the surrounding landscape.

A special thank you to the Southern Highlands Branch for their organisation of the symposium tour and the excellent line-up of speakers.

AGHS Vice Chair **Dr Jessica Hood** is Community Advocate Environmental Heritage at the National Trust of Australia (Victoria).



Top left: Joadja's School of Arts building, October 2018.

Top right: Carrington Row, showing some of the restored dwellings of the shale-oil mining community.

Bottom: AGHS Joadja symposium speakers (L to R) Charles Massy, Djon Mundine, Helen Armstrong, Craig Burton and Caroline Grant.

photos Jessica Hood

mainly whisky and gin, with local provenance to the site — all barley used for production is grown there. Their Spanish heritage influences the use of wine barrels sourced from Spain, adding a new layer of history to this rich cultural landscape.

The second half of the day allowed for a consideration of the pre-European landscape of Australia, and the ongoing custodianship of land. Emeritus Professor Helen Armstrong AM encouraged us to imagine how the colonial process may have been different, and how that could have changed relationships between settlers and Aboriginal communities. Dr Charles Massy OAM, author of *Call of the reed warbler*, spoke of his experience in regenerative land practices and farming. Reflecting on what he termed 'ecological literacy', he called on the need to consider the overall function of our landscapes, drawing on his experiences of learning from Aboriginal elders. Opportunities exist in Australia's rich food and dining culture to promote farming native ingredients, along with equipping farmers with skills for regenerating landscapes to ensure ongoing health of soils and waterways. Most importantly, Aboriginal communities should benefit from the intellectual property contained



Steven Halliday

AGHS ANNUAL CONFERENCE, MITTAGONG OCTOBER 2018

'Gardens in Times of Peace and Conflict'

So who am I, what do I do in the industry and why did I attend the conference? These were three questions I got asked quite regularly, and very validly of course, as I was a new young face amongst the regular conference goers. Let's answer those for you, and I will share my thoughts and insights from what was a fabulous long weekend in Mittagong.

I am a horticulturist in the gardens team for Sydney Living Museums, and have been for close to the past 10 years. Sydney Living Museums takes care of 12 of New South Wales's historically significant houses and museums and lucky me gets to help maintain the gardens and green spaces attached to those properties. So I guess you could say historic gardens are my passion, that's why I knew I had to make the trip to the Southern Highlands, not only for my personal professional development but to satisfy my curiosity too.

This was my inaugural attendance at the AGHS conference, and the Highlands sure did put on a show for us. For as long as I have been at Sydney Living Museums the AGHS journals had appeared on the lunch table at Vacluse House, and each year I would see the conference schedule and envision attending what always sounded like an amazing and informative few days. I had been a long time viewer but because this year the

conference was so close to my backyard, I became a first time attendee and made the short drive to attend the pre-conference symposium and the full conference schedule.

Pre-conference symposium – Fuelling the Fire

Having never been to an AGHS symposium before, I started the day with an open mind and was excited to explore and learn the history of the Joadja site. We boarded the bus and headed deep into the valley towards Joadja Creek, the bus abuzz with people getting acquainted and people catching up on the year that had passed. After the bbq lunch we all boarded the people-mover trailers and bumped our way around the remains of the old kerosene shale-mining town. It was interesting to see the mix of ruins and standing structures, and the town that once was. The town survived by using the abundance the land provided them until underground oil deposits were discovered to be less labour intensive, thus superseding kerosene, at which stage the town disappeared.

Following the tour, we entered the distillery for an afternoon of talks and discussions (and a sneaky tasting or two). The discussions were focused around the traditional owners of this country, their relationship with the land and how

Participants at AGHS's 2018 annual conference enjoyed hearing about – and discovering – Retford Park.

photo Steven Halliday



The delights of
Greenbrier Park.

photos Steven Halliday

we now go about fuelling the fire of repairing the land we have so carelessly taken advantage of. It was a thought-provoking day that broached some important subjects, and it was great to hear people's passion coming out.

Conference – Gardens in Times of Peace and Conflict

The three-day conference was evenly split with a day and a half of talks and a day and a half of garden visits, providing a nice mix of theory and practical elements. The great line-up of Friday morning speakers began with the perfect introduction to the region from Charlotte Webb in which she showed us the spread of gardens both geographically and chronologically on a timeline. It was quite amazing to see how significant families influenced the steady increase of settlement to the Southern Highlands, and how they also put their stamp on house and garden styles of the times. It was a good teaser for what was to come with the garden visits and gave us a little perspective to work with.

Ian Scott and Greg Jackson piqued my interest with a paper on the Remembrance Drive reaching from Sydney to Canberra. They spoke about the drive's history over the years and how it now needs to evolve with changing and growing infrastructure. I know next time I drive to Canberra I will take a lot more notice of the plantings and memorials that line the route.

Stuart Read was fantastic as always, reminding us that we are all advocates for historic gardens and we need to keep fighting for their survival. He used the term 'ratbags' as an endearing term to describe the people who ruffle the feathers and stand up for the cause, and throughout the weekend I discovered many people who definitely wore the 'ratbag' title with pride (and rightly so).

There were many more thought-provoking and informative talks that have made for some great conversations in the work lunchroom since, especially after John Dwyer's 'War on weeds'.

I was a little sceptical as to how the conference theme would present in the talks and I think some of the talks nailed the brief, though some lacked a little garden content for my liking.

Garden visits

Where do I start with the garden visits? Well firstly, Yellow Bus rules! No, seriously, we saw some fantastic gardens throughout the weekend and unfortunately I don't have a big enough word limit to tell you about them all, so I will just mention a few of my personal highlights. The standard of horticulture at every garden we visited was fantastic, major kudos to all involved. My bus buddy Stuart and I found it hard not to look at each garden and just imagine the work required to maintain them at those standards, where maybe we should have forgotten about that and just been taking it all in?

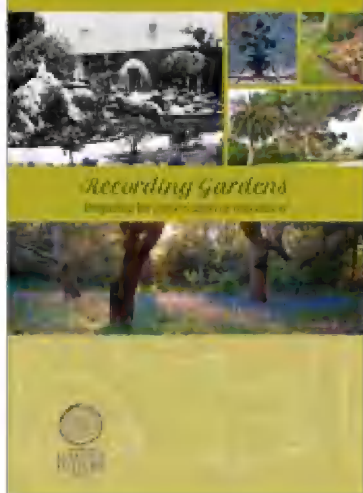
Retford Park was one of the standouts for me as it was just so grand, its sheer size and manicured landscapes took me aback. It didn't feel too dissimilar from a couple of properties I work at, minus the emus and pool house! To hear they are maintaining the garden completely chemically free was fantastic, making them an industry leader in my opinion. Keeping it in the National Trust sphere, Harper's Mansion was one of the tidiest and most well presented gardens that I saw, the volunteers there are doing a marvellous job.

Early on in the visits I made the call that Greenbrier Park would be one of my favourite gardens, and I think it was definitely up there. To me it was so different to the historic gardens that I work in. It was interesting to see what can be done with varied plant selection and not just plants from the nursery lists of the 1900s. Wandering the grounds I was amazed at the amount of new discoveries there were to be made at every turn, like the ruins or running water.

Overall I had a great time and it was inspiring to meet so many industry leaders, past and present. I would have loved to see some more young professionals there though – historic gardens are a small world to work in, and I know that there are so many others like myself who would love a forum like the conference to share thoughts and ideas. Looking forward to seeing my new friends in my hometown in 2020!

As the author **Steven Halliday** explains, he is a horticulturalist with Sydney Living Museums and takes great pride in being a part of the team that has become the custodians of these significant gardens. Steven also regularly contributes to the 'Plant Your History' blog on the Sydney Living Museums website.





Recording Gardens

Preparing for conservation or restoration

New edition now available!

At our annual conference in October 2018 in Mittagong, AGHS celebrated the release of a new edition of our very popular guide to recording gardens – both those already of historical significance, and newly created gardens.

Garden recordings provide an enduring record of a garden at a specific time.

When a garden has been recorded,

we have the ability to restore or recreate lost features. This guide explains in plain language how to measure and draw a garden, and which other details are needed – layout, composition, types of plants, soils, orientation, climate. *Recording gardens* (2018, ed Eliot Cooper) is based on its much loved 1998 predecessor, *Recording gardens: a guide to measuring and drawing gardens*, based on an AGHS seminar by Richard Ratcliffe. The new edition combines use of techniques now available online with the fundamental on-ground skills needed for recording gardens.

Available through AGHS's national office:

- \$20 plus postage for AGHS members (\$25 plus postage for non-members)
- orders tel 1800 678 466 or email info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au
- Digital and printed copies available for purchase soon on our website www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/

Successful WA exhibition 'Historic Gardens of Perth – Western Suburbs'

In September 2018 Perth's Cottesloe Civic Centre hosted the highly successful exhibition 'Historic Gardens of Perth – Western Suburbs', devised and researched by AGHS's WA branch. It follows the earlier 'Historic Gardens of Perth', exhibited in 2011.

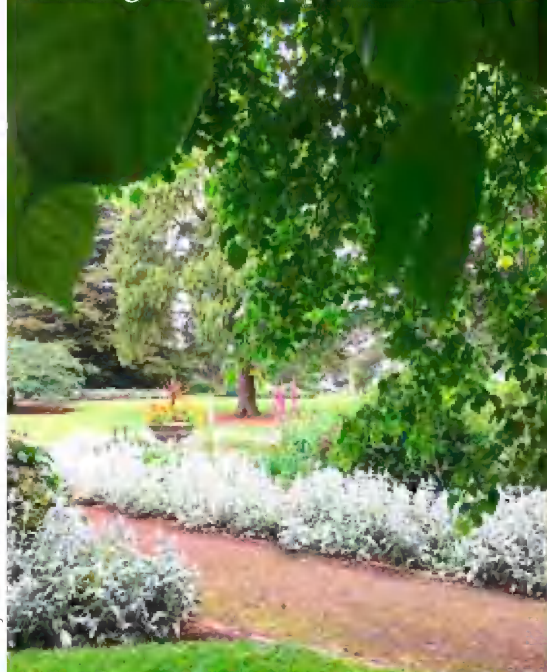
During the period of the exhibition the National Trust opened three of the local historic properties – Gallop House (the oldest private residence in the City of Nedlands), John Curtin's family home in Cottesloe, and Wanslea, which was built as an orphanage by the Independent Order of Oddfellows in 1905.

HISTORIC GARDENS OF PERTH WESTERN SUBURBS

An exhibition presented by the Australian Garden History Society (WA)



Funding for Camperdown Botanic Garden plantings



The Camperdown Botanic Gardens and Arboretum are part of a public park on the outskirts of Camperdown in Western Victoria, which was reserved 150 years ago in 1869. An initial plan was prepared by Daniel Bunce, then director of Geelong Botanic Gardens. In 1888 William Guilfoyle, renowned director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens (now RBGV Melbourne Garden) began a long association with Camperdown, which culminated in a comprehensive design and planting plan prepared in 1910. This plan is on display in the local heritage centre and is accompanied by Guilfoyle's notes and tree lists.

Since 2012, the Camperdown Botanic Gardens and Arboretum Trust has

been working to ensure that this special place, with its spectacular views over crater lakes Bullen Merri and Gnotuk and the volcanic plains of the Western District, is conserved and improved. The trust's volunteers have restored garden borders and beds and planted thousands of new plants. Small feature sections are dedicated to plants from New Zealand and Macaronesia (the Canary Islands region). In 2017 a conservation management plan was prepared for the site.

Through AGHS, the Camperdown Botanic Gardens and Arboretum Trust has recently been successful in applying for two \$5000 grants to continue its restoration and development work.

For the bookshelf

Christine Reid (2018) *Gardens on the edge: Australian landscapes, from desert to rainforest, ocean to plains*

Murdoch Books, Crows Nest, NSW, hardback, 288 pages, \$59.99

When launching this book in October 2018 at an inner city Melbourne bookstore, I noted the piles of garden and landscape publications ready for the Christmas trade. In a moment of mean-spiritedness, I asked if the world needed another book on

gardens? Then quickly reversed my position by saying that what the world did need was this book by accomplished garden writer and journalist Christine Reid.

What surprised me most about this beautifully written and illustrated book is the quiet way it redefines what we might consider an Australian garden. The 'edge' in the title is quietly enigmatic and refers to the collection of gardens from a range of locations that border a volcano, a harbour, an ocean, river, lake, desert or

hinterland. The 18 gardens selected are examined for their history of place making and occupation. The author and photographer have travelled and spent substantial time in recording what they found and reveal their insights in crafted essays of words and images which reflect their experience and understanding of horticultural achievement, landscape design and gardening experience.

Accomplished journalist and garden writer Christine Reid and renowned garden photographer Simon Griffith's credentials are as good as you'll get. This book delivers much pleasure and knowledge through word and image.

Gardens on the Edge is of course a romantic book and even the lyrical ring of the properties names sends a shiver down the spine: Murchison, Mulgoa, Murrumbidgee, Glenalta and Gnotuk (pronounced 'no tuck'), Anlaby, Coriyule, Bolinda Vale, Toora West and Down South. Locations reach from the Indian Ocean to the Sunshine Coast and from Tasmania to Alice Springs. The material defies our coast-hugger reputation for settlement and brings home to us the ephemeral nature of gardens. The owners' stories reveal the uncertainty that they live with, especially the dual threats of drought and bushfire. Most of them explained this was an essential part of the challenge –and even part of the fun!



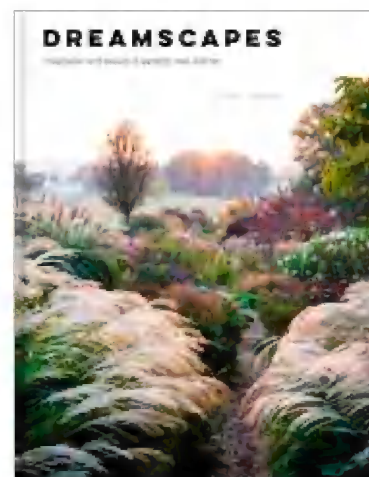
I like everything about this book from the weaving of garden history, stories of passion, disaster and the resilience of owners past and present, to the typography and the paper and print quality. *Gardens on the Edge* is a delicious book, a great read and leads you to believe in the triumph of hope.

AGHS chairman **Richard Heathcote** has a deep interest in the social history and interpretation of gardens and gardeners, and leads garden tours of the UK.

Claire Takacs (2017) *Dreamscapes: inspiration and beauty in gardens near and far* Hardie Grant Books, hardback, 304 pp, \$70

In this book highly recognised Australian garden photographer Claire Takacs takes readers on a visual journey to some of the best and most innovative gardens she has visited in Australia, New Zealand, USA, United Kingdom, Europe and Asia. Living up to the title *Dreamscapes*, the book centres on dreamy captures of incredible gardens. Truly a visual delight, and beautifully produced with full-page colour images, this book demonstrates why Takacs's photography is highly sought after for top international garden magazines and writers.

The 69 gardens in the book are divided into six sections, one for each continent represented, allowing readers to dive in at random, or to journey through a continent in a more focused read. Each garden is pictured across 4–8 absolutely stunning photographs, expertly composed to capture the textures and structures of plantings, the surrounding landscape and the play of light. These incredible photographs will be appreciated as aesthetically pleasing images in their own right, while also expertly interpreting the changes in light, colour, and seasons as experienced in these gardens. Alongside, Takacs provides short and accessible descriptions of each garden and her experience of it, often through multiple visits. She also gives an insight into the owners and/or designers and their connection to the place. Interestingly,



she often recalls the experience of photographing the garden, the passing of light, fog and shadow and the differences of experiencing the garden over time.

Takacs's photography work demonstrates the patience required in adequately recording a garden, and will surely motivate more to follow in her footsteps. Almost a kind of travel journal, the book gives an insight into Takacs's career as a garden photographer, starting off with her connection to Cloudehill in Olinda, Victoria, through a photography project while studying for the first of her features in *Gardens Illustrated*.

A must for all garden lovers, this book will interest armchair travellers, and those with a travel itinerary to fill. There is inspiration aplenty for home gardeners and professional designers as well, garnishing an appreciation for colour, light, and structure in planting schemes.

AGHS Vice Chair **Dr Jessica Hood** is Community Advocate Environmental Heritage at the National Trust of Australia (Victoria).

Alison Pouliot (2018) *The Allure of Fungi*
CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne, paperback, 280 pp,
\$49.99

Very rarely do I come across a book which makes me bore all my friends by saying 'You must read this'! But this is one of those.

Alison Pouliot uses the interconnectedness of fungi to look at plants, animals, fungi, indeed ecology, in a profoundly different way. This is a quite extraordinary book. It is about fungi but it is also about the living world, the inanimate world, history, literature, culture (both horti and arty), gardens and taxonomy, among other things. It is beautiful to look at (Pouliot is a wonderful photographer) and engaging, though dense, to read (Pouliot is a great science writer).

I meet many people interested in plants as both a guide and friend of various plant-focused institutions, as well as through AGHS. But I am still surprised how little people know about fungi. Indeed even though Whittaker moved fungi out of the plant kingdom into their own domain in 1967 and Cavalier-Smith showed us they were more closely related to animals than plants in 1987, many still think they are a form of largely underground plant. Many still see them and think the plants they are associated with are sick, rather than in most cases that they are an indicator of healthy ecosystems or gardens.

Sure there are some nasties. And they certainly dominate the media attention whether they are poisonous, like death caps (*Amanita phalloides*), or harmful to other plants like cinnamon fungus (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*, not actually a fungus either).

It is almost certainly because we only see, usually, the reproductive parts of fungi, above ground, on trees or in a myriad of other places, that we think that is all there is to them. Even then we miss out on a lot. While I knew we had many 'truffle' species in Australia, those fungi that live totally underground, I was not aware until Pouliot pointed it out that we in fact have somewhere between 2000 and 3000 species, almost 10 times the number in Europe. She gives a good reason for this, and it is largely to do with our climate.

Pouliot spends half her time in Europe and half in Australia each year. And in case you might think this book is dull and dry science, her sense of humour comes through in this piece on lichens (an association of fungi and bacteria):

While foraging in the Centovalli in southern Switzerland I came upon an unexpected case of lichens eating trucks. Each and every material of the long-abandoned vehicles in a disused quarry – metal, rubber, glass, plastic, wood, upholstery – was being slowly dismantled by their actions. Unlike my hiking companions, the lichens had no apparent preference for vehicles of French or Italian origin, with both being suitable for colonisation.

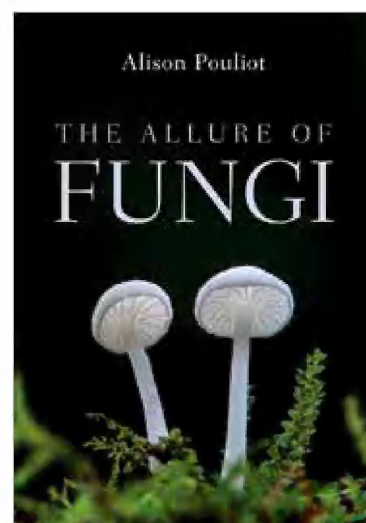
Pouliot invites us to consider cooperation as the core idea in biology instead of differentiation: 'Alliances, symbioses, mutualisms – a fungus uses every trick in the book to cooperate with other organisms'.

The book is unlike any other biology book I have read, citing references to Judith Wright, Patrick White and Hildegard von Bingen, to name a few.

Anyone interested in garden history (there is much history in this book) or gardens should buy it.

Full disclosure I once attended an extraordinary day-long fungi workshop run by Dr Pouliot – if you see one near you, do it!

Max Bourke AM has agricultural science training and has had a career in the arts and heritage. He is a former deputy chair of AGHS.



Exhibitions

Australia's mangroves – living on the edge: Deirdre Bean

Tweed Regional Gallery and Margaret Olley Art Centre,
Murwillumbah NSW

10am to 5pm

Wednesday–Sunday until 17 March 2019

Free admission

Mangroves (the ‘lungs of the sea’) play an essential role in tropical and subtropical coastal ecosystems, forming a protective buffer between ocean and land against runoff, storm surges and cyclones.

Deirdre Bean studied 34 of Australia's 47 species over a seven-year period. This exhibition of her botanically accurate watercolour paintings is the result.



Of interest: new online index of botanic garden employees

Thanks to volunteers, NSW State Archives online indexes have a new botanic gardens and government domains employees index covering the years 1863 to 1926.

The register shows date of birth, date of employment, status, salary and adjustments to salaries, and changes in duties of employees. Marital status, housing allowances, leave of absence, pensions and dates of death are also sometimes given. (Archives offers a copying service for the index.)

Cook and the Pacific

National Library of Australia, Parkes Place,
Canberra

10am to 5pm until 10 February 2019

Free admission

Cook and the Pacific follows James Cook's three remarkable Pacific voyages, exploring the region through the eyes of the British voyagers and First Nations peoples. Areas featured include Tahiti, New Zealand, the east coast of Australia, Hawaii and Siberia. The maps, manuscripts, rare books, oil paintings, watercolours by voyage artists, medallions, cartoons and poetry on display are drawn from around the world.

Beauty rich and rare

National Library of Australia, Parkes Place,
Canberra

10am to 5pm until 10 February 2019

Free admission

An immersive sound and light experience illuminating the natural beauty of Australia through the eyes of Sir Joseph Banks.

Grow, Gather, Share

Immigration Museum, 400 Flinders St,
Melbourne

10am to 5pm daily until 7 April 2019

Included in museum's entrance price

The agricultural practices of Victoria's First Nations peoples have evolved over tens of thousands of years. Since Europeans arrived, waves of migrant groups have brought with them individual culinary practices and traditions. Their gardens flourished in backyards and community spaces.

Cultural heritage and identity can be expressed, among other ways, through culinary practices. Unlike many museum exhibitions, 'Grow, Gather, Share' contains no objects apart from a pop-up garden. Instead, through a series of display panels, it presents stories celebrating the diversity and history of gardening and food in multicultural Victoria.

Bruna and Aniello Basiaco, featured in 'Grow, Gather, Share'.
photo Catherine Devery, Immigration Museum



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AUSTRALIAN
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Getting to know them

stories from the AGHS oral history collection

Victor Crittenden

Victor Crittenden OAM (b 27 April 1925, d June 2014), born in Newcastle NSW, was a librarian, bibliography, author, historian, gardener, and much more. In the late 1960s he moved from the position of associate librarian at the University of New England in Armidale to be foundation librarian at the Canberra College of Advanced Education (now the University of Canberra) which he ruled as a self-described 'benevolent dictatorship'.

He was a president of the ACT, Monaro and Riverina Branch, and started the publishers Mulini Press, through which he published early Australian garden books and works on other subjects.

I started school in Quirindi [NSW] and spent three years there ... Mother started a garden, she was a keen gardener, and I had a garden also ... That was where I first learnt how to grow things from cuttings ... I wanted to be an architect. I'd built houses, model houses and mud houses in the garden ever since I can remember.

Did you build them with gardens?

Oh, they always had a garden, yes.

The [Society's] national management committee is a group from all around the country with different climates, different communities. ... Are there issues of melding together that you would like to talk about that really indicate how the Society functioned ... how that committee moved it forward and continued to evolve the ethos?

I think one of the important moves in the Society was the creation of the garden history database ... by Richard Aitken – to pull together all the material about garden history and from that, of course ... the *Oxford companion to Australian gardens*. That, I think, is one of the important things that moved garden history forward into garden history, not just garden looking.

There was a workshop here in your garden?

Dick [Ratcliffe] had written a booklet about surveying gardens [ed note: *Recording gardens*, Mulini Press 1998 is the antecedent of AGHS's 2018 publication *Recording gardens*, see p 31] ... We decided that we would ... do a garden ... and I said, 'Well, you can do my garden if you like'. ... Richard Ratcliffe said he would supervise it.

Looking back, what do you see about the Society? Has that fulfilled your expectations?

Victor Crittenden in his Canberra home at the time of the 2010 interview.
photo Roslyn Burge



It's made everybody aware of the beauty and the value of the historic gardens.

Would you like to talk about trees?

Particularly Australian trees. I've always loved gum trees. As a child I ran a little magazine of my own ... I wrote an article ... about Australian gum trees because English people hated the gum trees, said they were dreadful, scraggy sort of things and I wrote ... in favour of the gum tree and what I thought, the gum tree was beautiful and I painted a painting of a gum tree in this magazine.

We've been talking for almost two hours and usually by that time people are flagging and I think the reverse is happening. You're full of enthusiasm about your latest subject ...

Yes, yes. Well, you should have stopped me at three minutes.

Mr Victor Crittenden OAM was interviewed by historian and AGHS member Roslyn Burge in 2010. The interview record is held by the Society as part of Australia's garden history archives and accessible by contacting the Australian Garden History Society's head office in Melbourne. There is also a copy in the State Library of Victoria.

Getting to know them presents readers with a snapshot of the Society's national oral history collection. Excerpts quoted here usually (but not always) appear in the order of the original interview transcripts.

Australian Garden History (vol 26 no 1 July 2014) contained tributes to Victor Crittenden.



The Australian Garden History Society promotes awareness and conservation of significant gardens and cultural landscapes through engagement, research, advocacy and activities.